

The University of Chicago

THE  
GOVERNMENT OF THE AMERICAN  
PUBLIC LIBRARY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE  
FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE LIBRARY  
SCHOOL IN CANDIDACY FOR THE  
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1934

By  
CARLETON BRUNS JOECKEL

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
STUDIES IN LIBRARY SCIENCE

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THE GOVERNMENT OF  
THE AMERICAN PUBLIC LIBRARY

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS  
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## FOREWORD

THE public library, in common with all other public institutions and agencies which derive their support from state and local governments, has frequently been called upon in recent years for an evaluation of its services and a justification of its expenditures. The taxpayer, hard pressed to meet his annual tax bill, has insistently demanded to be shown what services the library renders which entitle it to his support. The librarian, equally hard pressed, with sharply reduced income and staff, to meet the demands of a suddenly increased reading public, has had little opportunity for careful study and evaluation of these services and has had to answer in the general terms of borrowers registered and books circulated. Neither he nor the taxpayer has had available information of such scope and character as to enable him to evaluate the services of the library to the community or to clarify its relationship to other agencies of the government.

Unfortunately, the student of government has contributed but slightly to an understanding of the library's services and its governmental relationships. In the main, he has given scant consideration to the library, and when he has considered it, although he has highly rated its potential significance as a social institution, he has thought of its activities as relatively unimportant in contrast with those of other more extensive and expensive governmental agencies.

Because of the lack of adequate information concerning these matters so fundamental to the existence of the library, a joint committee of the American Library Association and the Social Science Research Council was appointed in the summer of 1932 to consider the situation. The committee, consisting of Milton J. Ferguson, Carleton B. Joeckel, and Clarence B. Lester, of the American Library Association, and Augustus R. Hatton (chair-



man), Simeon E. Leland, and Lent D. Upson, of the Social Science Research Council, formulated a preliminary report in July, 1932, which included the following statement and a recommendation that the Social Science Research Council be petitioned to provide funds sufficient to carry out a study along the lines suggested:

Libraries are assuming a larger and larger place in our social organization. So far there is no clear-cut idea as to their relation to the government in general, the particular divisions of government, or the extent to which they are or should be supported from public funds. There are wide differences of opinion as to the best form of organization for library service. This includes not only state libraries but also library service of all sorts. The form of administrative organization for library purposes varies widely. In matters of financial support and administration there are the widest possible differences of opinion and practice. The literature of public administration practically ignores the entire question of the library and its relation to other governmental units. Under present economic conditions, it is inevitable that such questions will be pressed for solution within the next year. It is therefore of the utmost importance that an authoritative study be made as soon as possible of the library problem as thus stated.

The preliminary report, with petition, was submitted to the Social Science Research Council, but without success. In the spring of 1933 the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago recast the proposal, submitted it to the Carnegie Corporation of New York and received a grant, and in October it initiated the study. The original proposal was broken down and expanded to cover problems of the following types: (1) the kinds of governmental organization under which public libraries function; (2) the service of the public library to specific population and community groups; (3) the cost of library service; (4) the basis of library support; (5) the library as affected by the political unit; (6) library service to schools.

Professor Carleton B. Joeckel, of the Department of Library Science of the University of Michigan, a holder of an American Library Association fellowship at the Graduate Library School, 1933-34, Mr. Arnold Miles, of the Public Administration Service, of Chicago, and Professor Douglas Waples, of the Graduate Library School, were assigned different aspects of the general

subject under my direction, and have been steadily engaged in the investigation since October, 1933. Throughout their study they have had the opportunity of consulting with members of the original committee, with the staff of the University of Chicago, and with representatives of the headquarters staffs of the American Library Association and Public Administration Service. They have also profited greatly from information and suggestions from librarians and governmental officials throughout the country.

The present volume, the first part of the study to be completed, has been prepared by Professor Joeckel. In it, as he has indicated in his Introduction, he has undertaken to describe, analyze, and evaluate the position of the public library in the structure of government in the United States. He has dealt with the legal forms and types of governmental organization of the public library and with its relation to the city or other political unit to which it is attached or which it serves, and has considered the library primarily as a piece of governmental machinery and its efficiency as such, rather than the practical problems of its internal administration. Long a student of government, a teacher of library administration, and an experienced librarian, Professor Joeckel has treated these aspects of the general subject with unusual effectiveness, and his study should be of significance not only to library administrators but to students of government as well.

In the near future, reports of other aspects of the investigation now in preparation by Mr. Miles and Professor Waples will be separately published. Through the three publications it is hoped that the relation of the library to public administration will be greatly clarified, and that information essential to a better understanding of the library's functions, service, and support may be available for taxpayer, librarian, political scientist, and citizen.

LOUIS R. WILSON

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
March, 1935



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## INTRODUCTION

THE major purpose of this study is to describe, analyze, and evaluate the position of the public library in the structure of government in the United States. The use of the word "government" in the title, therefore, is deliberate. We are here concerned with the legal forms and types of governmental organization of the public library and with its relation to the city or other political unit to which it is attached or which it serves.

There is thus implied, for the purposes of this investigation, a rough distinction between government and administration.<sup>1</sup> Our field of interest is primarily in the library as a piece of governmental machinery and in its efficiency as such. The practical problems of internal administration—the detailed operation of the machine—have in general been considered to be beyond the scope of the inquiry. In other words, the field covered may be regarded as extending from the state and the city down to and including the governmental authority in direct control of the library. Below that level there has ordinarily been no attempt to go.

Certain details connected with financial and budgetary procedures and with the status of library personnel have been brought into the field of investigation at various points, because these matters are directly affected by the types of library government and their consideration therefore seems germane to the discussion. In the chapters on larger units of library service, also, it has been necessary to raise the question of the proper functions of the library in order to show how these should affect the actual size of the library unit. In general, questions of a purely administrative nature have been avoided, as has any

<sup>1</sup> Such, e.g., as that made in the "Century Political Science Series" between T. H. Reed's *Municipal Government in the United States* (rev. ed.; New York, 1934) and L. D. Upson's *Practice of Municipal Administration* (New York, 1926).

attempt at the evaluation of library service, and attention has been concentrated on questions of library government.

#### DEFINITION OF PUBLIC LIBRARY

Accurate and precise definition of the term "public library" is almost surprisingly difficult. The use of any limiting clauses in the definition immediately excludes numerous institutions which are generally considered to be public libraries. If the limitation of governmental control is imposed, scores of well-known libraries which are in no way officially a part of government must be omitted. Again, if limitations of ownership or of financial support by local governmental units are made, numerous libraries which are essentially public do not fit the definition. Many public libraries are not owned by any unit of government, and some receive no support whatever from public funds. The only really essential requirement in the definition of a public library is that its use should be free to all residents of the community on equal terms.

For the purposes of the present study, any library which has been officially charged with the responsibility, or has voluntarily assumed the responsibility, for providing free library service of a general nature<sup>2</sup> to a particular community, or to a more or less definite portion of it, has been considered to be a public library. After all, minute accuracy in definition is perhaps unimportant. In most places it is relatively easy to designate what library is regarded as the public library of the community.<sup>3</sup>

#### OBJECTIVES AND METHODS OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study may be briefly stated. First of all, an attempt has been made to define and to describe accurately the various types of library government as they are found in the United States today. Historical backgrounds and the evolution of the different groups have been introduced because

<sup>2</sup> This has been considered to mean both reference and circulation service. A number of free public reference libraries, usually of the private corporation type, might easily have been added to the libraries studied.

<sup>3</sup> In some cities, also, there is more than one public library.

these matters are essential to a proper understanding of any type in its present form. Second, an effort has been made to evaluate each type of library in terms of its strength and weakness and of its advantages and disadvantages. Finally, particularly in chapters ix and x, the future possibilities of the public library as a function of government have been considered. Throughout, particular attention has been given to the essential legal nature of the library and to the question of its position as a matter of state or local concern.

In the actual description of the different types of library organization, several alternatives in method of presentation might have been followed. One possible basis of classification would have been the type of city government. All libraries in mayor-council cities would then have been considered together, all libraries in commission cities, and all libraries in council-manager cities. However, as will be repeatedly noted in the pages which follow, there is not necessarily a close correlation between the type of city government and the type of library government. All methods of library organization are to be found in all kinds of cities. The use of this method would therefore have involved an unnecessary amount of repetition.

Another method of classification is the division of libraries by the type of managing authority. Here the principal subdivisions are: libraries controlled by library boards, libraries managed by boards of education, and libraries without boards managed as city or county departments by a single executive. A third form of classification follows the kinds of governmental units of which the library is usually a part.

The classification actually used in the succeeding chapters is a combination of the second and third methods just mentioned. The principal groups chosen for consideration are as follows: private corporation and association libraries (chap. iii), school-district libraries (chap. iv), city department libraries without boards (chap. v), municipal libraries managed by boards (chaps. vi and vii), and county and other larger unit libraries (chaps. ix and x). This classification is significant because it gives primary



consideration to the important variations in library structure and management caused by the affiliation of the library with the different kinds of governmental units. It has the added value of following in the main the divisions commonly accepted and understood in the library world today.

To a considerable extent this method cuts across the classification by types of library control. Libraries managed by boards are found in all but one of the classes listed above; in fact, this type of library management is so dominant that it dwarfs all other groups. However, the classification used still has value because the actual position and powers of library boards vary considerably in each of the different groups. In order to give unity to the consideration of the board type of library direction, a general appraisal of the library board as an agency of government has been attempted in chapter viii.

The factual basis for the survey has been provided by a detailed analysis of library government in the 310 American cities having a population of over 30,000 according to the census of 1930. Complete information regarding practically all of these libraries has been obtained by a study of laws, city charters, and ordinances governing the libraries, and by detailed questionnaires sent to each city. In addition, personal visits have been paid to many cities especially selected as representative examples of the different types. While attention has been concentrated on these larger libraries, consideration has been given at all times to public libraries in smaller cities and towns. In the main, the governmental types of these libraries are the same as those found in larger places, and questions of control and governmental relationship are generally similar.

As an activity of government, the public library is comparatively limited and inconspicuous. Judged by the proportion of public expenditures devoted to its use, it is one of the least important of all the activities of local government. The services it performs, also, are by no means spectacular and cannot be easily evaluated. It is even difficult to state the aims and objects of library service in any forceful and compelling manner.

These facts, added to the slow transition of the library from a voluntary or subscription basis to full public status, have been largely responsible for the present highly varied and often apparently haphazard position of the library function of government. If its material importance had been greater and its purposes more clearly defined and understood, more care and attention might have been devoted to its formal place in government. The need for a better understanding of the public library in its governmental relations is, therefore, apparent, and the present survey is offered as an initial attempt in this direction.





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## CHAPTER I

### BACKGROUNDS OF THE MODERN PUBLIC LIBRARY: PREDECESSORS AND LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

PERHAPS more than any other function of local government, the free public library of today is intimately linked by tradition, by custom, and even by law, with its historic backgrounds. Without a preliminary view of the institutions which preceded it and out of which it developed by a slow evolutionary process, and without sympathetic appreciation of the stages through which it has progressed as a part of the governmental structure, it is difficult to understand clearly the forms library organization has assumed today. Throughout our library history there is apparent a curious paradox. While libraries have been increasingly liberal in the development of their services to users, the various authorities responsible for their management have been immensely conservative in their reluctance to alter the traditional forms of library organization. Doubtless the very measure of success achieved by the library as a community service under the old accepted forms has aided greatly in solidifying this attitude of conservatism.

It is the purpose of this chapter, therefore, to describe, as briefly as is consistent with clearness, the antecedents of the free public library and to summarize its legislative history up to the present time. Needless to say, no attempt will be made in this study to present a complete picture of the exceedingly interesting period in American library history which preceded the real beginnings of free libraries as we now define them. Rather, special attention will be given to the legal organization of these early libraries in order to show how closely their successors have followed the old patterns.

## PREDECESSORS OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

It seems best to characterize the forerunners of the public library mainly in terms of the library scene of about 1850, the date at which the free-library movement really became effective. As will be noted later in the chapter, important preliminary developments in tax-supported library service had already begun prior to that date, but the founding of the Boston Public Library at the middle of the century marked the beginning of a new chapter in library history.

*The social libraries.*—Long before the public library became a component part of town and city government in the United States, there existed a group of libraries of such importance that they almost inevitably provided the models for the new governmental service. These older libraries, indeed, as late as 1876 were regularly described as “public” libraries, although none of them met the now accepted definition of a public library as an institution free to all citizens. Indeed, the fundamental distinction between the old and the new lay in the fact that the older libraries were not free to all. Instead they were “public” in the English sense of being available for use by those who subscribed to certain financial requirements applying equally to all users.

Using the designation common in contemporary descriptions, this whole group of libraries may be referred to as “social” libraries,<sup>1</sup> although the term embraces a number of divergent types. If the simplest classification is used, two principal groups may be distinguished, proprietary and subscription (or association) libraries. The first class was based on the joint-stock principle, involving the actual ownership of shares in the property of the library, these shares usually being transferable to others by sale or by will. The second class required merely the payment of an annual fee or subscription which entitled the user to membership in the association as long as dues were regularly paid.<sup>2</sup> Even this elementary classification is subject to

<sup>1</sup> C. C. Jewett, *Notices of Public Libraries in the United States* (Washington, 1851), p. 189.

<sup>2</sup> C. K. Bolton, *Proprietary and Subscription Libraries* (Chicago, 1912), pp. 1-2.

some qualification since many of the proprietary libraries provided for annual subscriptions by persons who were not share-owners or "proprietors."<sup>3</sup>

Among the second class mentioned, the subscription or association libraries, there were several subordinate types, most of them designed to provide books for young men. The so-called "mercantile" libraries were intended primarily for the use of young merchants' clerks.<sup>4</sup> A similar group, called mechanics' or apprentices' libraries, served the needs of young men and older boys of the artisan class. In addition to these very well-known types, other "young men's" libraries existed in many places, variously called "young men's institutes," "associations," "societies," or simply "libraries."<sup>5</sup> At a slightly later period there came into the field libraries of the Young Men's Christian Association and of the Catholic Young Men's Association.<sup>6</sup> And, finally, even the "ladies" were represented by library associations for their special use, which began to flourish about 1850. These "ladies' libraries" were most numerous in Michigan, but were also found in other states.<sup>7</sup>

Beginning with the famous "mother of all the subscription libraries in America," founded by Benjamin Franklin and his associates in 1731, later officially styled the Library Company of Philadelphia, the social library movement made modest progress before the Revolution, and afterward, in the years between 1785 and 1850, spread rapidly in the northern and eastern states and also in the South.<sup>8</sup> By 1849 the type was so common that it was

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8, and Josiah Quincy, *History of the Boston Athenaeum* (Cambridge, 1851), p. 48.

<sup>4</sup> F. B. Perkins, "Young Men's Mercantile Libraries," U.S. Bureau of Education, *Public Libraries in the United States* (Washington, 1876), Part I, pp. 378-85.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Bureau of Education, *Public Libraries in the United States* (Washington, 1876), Part I, p. 384 (Special Report). Hereafter cited as *U.S. Report* (1876).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 386-88.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. xxxix; A. F. Bixby, *Historical Sketches of the Ladies' Library Associations of the State of Michigan* (Adrian, Mich., 1876).

<sup>8</sup> W. I. Fletcher, "Proprietary Library in Relation to the Public Library Movement," *Library Journal*, XXXI (1906), c269; *U.S. Report* (1876), chap. xxxix.



reported that "in some states, almost every town has under some form, a social library."<sup>9</sup> At that date, according to admittedly incomplete statistics, there were 126 such libraries with a total of over 600,000 volumes.<sup>10</sup>

Practically speaking, it seems fair to say that this whole galaxy of social libraries was in a collective sense a "public" library system based on the ability of users to pay for the kind of service desired. The relatively prosperous and expensive proprietary libraries, with shares selling usually at about \$25,<sup>11</sup> obviously catered to persons of social standing and some degree of financial importance. The various kinds of young men's libraries, with dues in some cases as low as \$1.00 a year, served their readers (not so generously, to be sure) at a cost within the means of almost anyone. In many towns and cities association libraries of a general nature served the public at similarly modest rates, perhaps roughly comparable to taxes later paid by the same persons for public library purposes.

Long before 1850, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia each had examples of proprietary, mercantile, and mechanics' libraries, and at a later date smaller cities were often provided with library service from more than one of these types. Moreover, as time went on the more or less artificial distinction between the classes of readers served by the various kinds of libraries tended to break down; as a matter of fact, most of the subscription libraries were only too glad to enrol anyone willing to pay the fees charged.<sup>12</sup>

From the viewpoint of use, then, the margin between the social libraries and their natural successors, the free public libraries, was on the whole a narrow one.

*Legal structure of the social libraries.*—But our primary interest in the social libraries is in their legal organization. The brief

<sup>9</sup> Jewett, *loc. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 190-91.

<sup>11</sup> Three hundred dollars, however, for the Boston Athenaeum.

<sup>12</sup> The New York Mercantile Library is a good example.

analysis which follows is based on a study of the charters of the larger and best-known libraries of this sort in existence in 1850. The group chosen for examination includes the three largest libraries of the type in the country, the Boston Athenaeum,<sup>13</sup> the New York Society Library,<sup>14</sup> and the Library Company of Philadelphia;<sup>15</sup> the Charleston (South Carolina) Library Society,<sup>16</sup> the largest library in the South; and the Redwood Library (Newport),<sup>17</sup> the Salem Athenaeum,<sup>18</sup> and the Roxbury Athenaeum<sup>19</sup> in New England. Representing the mechanics-mercantile group in Boston are the Boston Mercantile Library<sup>20</sup> and the Mechanic Apprentices' Library,<sup>21</sup> both founded in 1820, and the earliest examples of their respective types; and in New York the Mercantile Library,<sup>22</sup> probably in 1850 the most active circulating library in the United States. These were the principal available models at the middle of the nineteenth century to which the founders of the new public libraries might look for examples.

The state governments of the period were perfectly ready to recognize the important public service performed by the establishment of such libraries and were willing to throw about them the mantle of official approval and protection, without admit-

<sup>13</sup> Massachusetts, *Laws*, 1780-1807, III, 378-80 (passed February 13, 1807).

<sup>14</sup> New York Society Library, *Alphabetical and Analytical Catalogue . . . with the Charter, By-Laws, etc.* (New York, 1850), pp. xi-xviii; *Laws of the State of New York*, 1789-96, III, 59-60 (Official Reprint, 1897; law of February 18, 1789).

<sup>15</sup> Library Company of Philadelphia, *Catalogue . . . with the Charter, Laws, and Regulations* (Philadelphia, 1789), pp. xv-xix.

<sup>16</sup> "Original Rules and Members of the Charlestown Library Society," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, XXIII (1922), 163-70.

<sup>17</sup> Redwood Library, *One Hundred and Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Incorporation of the Redwood Library* (Newport, 1922), p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Massachusetts, *Laws*, 1809-12, pp. 148-50 (passed March 6, 1810).

<sup>19</sup> Massachusetts, *Acts and Resolves*, 1851, chap. 152.

<sup>20</sup> Massachusetts, *Acts and Resolves*, 1845, chap. 151.

<sup>21</sup> Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics' Association, *Annals* (Boston, 1853).

<sup>22</sup> Charter recorded March 12, 1823, Office of the Registrar for the City and County of New York. Mercantile Library Association, *Annual Report*, 1847 (27th); also *Laws of the State of New York*, 1866 (act of May 8, 1866).

ting as yet the principle of public support for such institutions. The preamble of the act of incorporation of the Boston Athenaeum describes the "laudable object" of the institution and remarks upon its purpose to build an "extensive collection of such rare and valuable works, in ancient and modern languages, as are not usually to be met with in this country." This is typical of many similar references.

All of the libraries cited, and certainly the great mass of all similar libraries, were organized as legal corporations. Their incorporators were duly declared to be "one body politic and corporate," and their names were frequently listed in the acts creating the libraries. Although New York in 1796 and Massachusetts in 1798 passed general laws permitting the founding of library corporations of this sort, it was usual for them to be incorporated by special charters or statutes. The libraries founded prior to the Revolution received their charters from their respective colonial governors; afterward they were generally incorporated by special acts of the state legislatures, and frequent amendments were required to make necessary changes in details of organization and management.

The powers of the corporation were enumerated at length in the statutes and were, in general, similar to those of all legal corporations, with special provisions suited to the needs of the libraries. The language in which these grants of power were made to the different libraries was very much the same, and certain clauses were repeated over and over again. The powers most commonly specified included the following: (1) the corporation was to have perpetual succession; (2) it could purchase, hold, and dispose of real and personal property; (3) it could receive donations, bequests, and subscriptions; (4) it could "sue and be sued"; (5) it could have a common seal; (6) it could elect officers; and (7) it could enact by-laws and rules and regulations. The historical significance of these provisions will be seen in later portions of this study, particularly in the chapter dealing with association and corporation libraries.

The actual management of all these libraries was uniformly

placed in the hands of permanent boards of trustees or directors elected by the proprietors or members of the association.<sup>23</sup> The powers conferred upon the boards varied considerably but usually included the appointment, dismissal, and fixing of compensation of officers and employees, the purchase of books and necessary equipment, and sometimes the renting of quarters. As a rule, however, the trustees were pretty closely accountable to the association as a whole. Their usual term of office was one year, and the elections held at the annual meetings were by no means always perfunctory affairs. Moreover, perusal of the reports of these libraries makes it quite evident that the trustees devoted themselves very earnestly and conscientiously to the management of their libraries.

With respect to the character of the men who served as trustees of the various libraries, a sharp distinction can be made between the boards of the proprietary libraries and those of the mechanics' and mercantile group. The membership rosters of the boards of the former class read like a combined social *Blue Book* and *Who's Who*. The trustees of such libraries were often persons of much distinction,<sup>24</sup> and membership on the boards was obviously a real honor and a definite responsibility. Moreover, in spite of the annual elections just mentioned, long periods of service as board members were common.<sup>25</sup>

Trusteeship in the mercantile and mechanics' libraries was quite another matter. Here the membership of the association was made up of young men, many of them minors, and the directors were chosen from the members. Naturally some doubt was felt as to the wisdom of intrusting the management of important libraries to changing groups of very young men, and in

<sup>23</sup> A possible exception was the Charleston Library Society. This was managed by a committee of twelve members appointed at each quarterly meeting.

<sup>24</sup> On the Boston Athenaeum Board about 1850 were Josiah Quincy, Jr., William H. Prescott, and Oliver Wendell Holmes.

<sup>25</sup> Gulian C. Verplanck served as a trustee of the New York Society Library for fifty-eight years (A. B. Keep, *History of the New York Society Library* [New York, 1908], pp. 554-60).

some instances partial control was vested in other boards composed of older men.<sup>26</sup>

Much might be added by way of detailed illustration to the foregoing highly summarized account of the purpose and government of the social libraries, but the essential points are perhaps sufficiently clear. They may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. The respectability, general social importance, and educational value of libraries were admitted and given the formal sanction of law.

2. The use of libraries by the reading public became an established custom, and the transition to library service administered by cities and towns was not difficult. After all, the idea of governmentally controlled libraries was not entirely new.

3. The custom of founding or governing individual libraries by special legislation was well established in the case of widely known and important examples. This method naturally strengthened the conception of the library as a powerful and independently organized institution.

4. The custom of management of libraries by boards of trustees was definitely fastened upon the American library system. Further, the tradition of trusteeship itself as an office of responsibility, importance, and honor was also firmly rooted.

The pattern for the future was thus clearly outlined: independent libraries, strong management by boards of prominent citizens, and recognition of library service as an important and useful function.

*School-district public libraries.*—Thus far we have dealt with a group of libraries which were only semipublic; we have now to describe a system of library service established by state laws, supported by public funds, and free to all citizens. This was composed of libraries attached to the school district as a governmental unit but intended to serve both adults and children.

To New York State goes the honor for the conception of this

<sup>26</sup> Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics' Association, *Annals* (1853), p. 170; *Laws of the State of New York*, 1830, chap. 53 (Clinton Hall Association).



plan and for its vigorous though perhaps somewhat misguided prosecution. For the proper understanding of the scheme, it is necessary to recall that the beginnings of New York state schools go back to 1795 and that a real foundation for the common-school system was made by the educational law of 1812 passed as the result of recommendations made by a Commission on Common Schools appointed by Governor Daniel D. Tompkins.<sup>27</sup>

Although credit for the school-district library is variously assigned, the first suggestion seems to have been made by the Commission just mentioned in its report of February 17, 1812, in which the commissioners expressed "their solicitude as to the introduction of proper books into the contemplated schools" because "a judicious selection of books" is "calculated to enlighten the understanding" and "to improve the heart."<sup>28</sup> Fifteen years later, in 1827, Governor De Witt Clinton, always a strong supporter of education, advocated "small and suitable collections of books and maps attached to our common schools."<sup>29</sup> Further indorsements were made by Azariah Flagg, in his capacity as superintendent of schools in 1830; and John A. Dix, his successor in office, in 1834, advocated a district tax for this purpose.<sup>30</sup>

As a result of these recommendations, the legislature in 1835 passed what was really the first state law providing for tax-supported free library service.<sup>31</sup> By this law the inhabitants of each school district were authorized "to lay a tax on the district . . . for the purchase of a district library." This was not to exceed \$20 for the first year and \$10 a year subsequently. For good measure, the districts were further authorized to purchase

<sup>27</sup> T. E. Finegan, *Establishment and Development of the School System of New York* (Syracuse, 1913); also his *Free Schools: A Documentary History of the Free School Movement in New York State* (Albany, 1921), p. 34.

<sup>28</sup> New York (State) Governor, *Messages from the Governors, 1683-1906*, ed. C. Z. Lincoln (Albany, 1909), II, 726.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 160.

<sup>30</sup> H. B. Adams, *Public Libraries and Popular Education* (Albany, 1900), p. 95 (University of the State of New York, "Home Education Bulletin," No. 31 [May, 1900]).

<sup>31</sup> *Laws of the State of New York, 1835*, chap. 80.

a "bookcase." In this initial phase the law proved ineffective, but in 1838 provisions were added for the annual distribution of \$55,000 from the income of the United States "deposit fund" among the school districts for the purchase of libraries, provided they raised an equal amount from their own resources.<sup>32</sup> With this practical inducement, the system began to grow rapidly, and in 1847 there were no less than 8,070 such "libraries," totaling 1,338,848 volumes.<sup>33</sup> By 1853 the total number of volumes had passed 1,600,000, but that figure represented the peak of the movement, which thereafter steadily declined. Not the least of the reasons for the decline was the permission granted by the law of 1838 and subsequent laws for the possible diversion of library funds to the purchase of apparatus and the payment of teachers' salaries.<sup>34</sup>

The later history of these libraries is a melancholy one. They dragged out a moribund existence, steadily decreasing in size and with their weaknesses commented on officially by local school commissioners, state superintendents of education, and governors alike. As late as 1882 Governor Alonzo Cornell, and even later in 1884 Governor Grover Cleveland, commented on their decline and urged changes in their administration.<sup>35</sup> The change recommended was finally effected by a law passed in 1892 which definitely made them school libraries and provided that they be kept in the school building with the teacher as librarian.<sup>36</sup>

So important and so influential and widely copied was this system of district libraries in New York that some comment on the principles involved and the significance of the scheme in public library history is in point. The whole plan was obviously

<sup>32</sup> *Laws of the State of New York*, 1838, chap. 237, sec. 4; also University of the State of New York, *School Libraries: Their History, Development, Present Purpose and Function in Our Educational System* (Albany, 1920), p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Jewett, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>34</sup> University of the State of New York, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> New York (State) Governor, *op. cit.*, VII, 686-87, 947.

<sup>36</sup> University of the State of New York, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

theoretical, conceived and sponsored by men at the head of the governmental and educational structure of the state and not, according to available evidence, based on widespread popular demand and interest or on local experimentation. It was an attempt to create a comprehensive library system by legislative fiat, with relatively little consideration of the essential details necessary to make the plan a success. There were many reasons for the failure of the scheme to develop as it had been planned. First of all, the governmental unit chosen as the basis for service was too small. In New York in 1850 there were no less than 11,397<sup>37</sup> school districts, averaging about four square miles in area and only 267 persons to the district. The libraries themselves averaged 166 volumes each,<sup>38</sup> a pitifully small figure, and even at the peak were only slightly greater. Everything about the scheme was too small.

Worse still, provisions for the government and administration of the libraries were decidedly imperfect. The laws provided that the librarian should be elected annually by the taxable inhabitants of the district, and that he should be responsible to the trustees of the district acting as trustees of the library. Further, no definite location, as in the schoolhouse, for instance, was provided for the library. The result was a succession of changing librarians and changing locations for the library itself. No wonder that the books were difficult to find and use and that the collections disappeared! It is significant that no recorded statistics of circulation or use of the books are cited by any of the authorities.

The selection of the few books contained in the libraries also presented many difficulties and was subject to considerable criticism. That the rapid development of these libraries provided a "rich harvest" for Harper's and other publishers of "school district libraries" is not surprising.<sup>39</sup> Eventually it be-

<sup>37</sup> New York State Education Department, *Annual Report*, XI (1913-14), table following p. 576.

<sup>38</sup> Jewett, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

<sup>39</sup> J. H. Harper, *The House of Harper* (New York, 1912), pp. 55-58, 64; also J. C. Derby, *Fifty Years among Authors, Books and Publishers* (New York, 1884), pp. 101-4.

came necessary to pass laws forbidding school commissioners to act as agents for publishers<sup>40</sup> and for the superintendent of public instruction to make lists of books suitable for the district libraries.<sup>41</sup>

Of the three essentials for an efficient library—books, staff, and building—the school-district system provided only books, and those inadequately. Nevertheless, it did much to establish certain principles which form the basis of our present public library system. For one thing, it provided for taxation for free library service and also for state aid to libraries, both important milestones in library history. Even more significant, perhaps, it recognized the library as an educational agency, an extension of the system of public education beyond the formal instruction offered by the schools; in other words, it was a movement toward what we now call “adult education.”<sup>42</sup>

Other states were not slow in copying the New York plan, and laws for school-district libraries were passed in nine of the states before 1850 and in ten more between that date and 1876.<sup>43</sup> In all of these states a history more or less similar to that of New York may be traced. Next to New York, Massachusetts had the largest number of these libraries, 700, at the middle of the century.<sup>44</sup> The movement in this state was largely fathered by Horace Mann, and was quite strictly a system of libraries for schools.<sup>45</sup> In 1850, simultaneously with the beginning of the town-library movement, the law was repealed, and thereafter preference was given to town libraries. Among the New England or eastern states it would appear that the district libraries

<sup>40</sup> *Laws of the State of New York*, 1856, chap. 179, sec. 8.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. 186.

<sup>42</sup> G. W. Cole, *Early Library Development in New York State* (New York, 1927), pp. 11-12.

<sup>43</sup> *U.S. Report* (1876), pp. 38-59.

<sup>44</sup> Jewett, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

<sup>45</sup> *U.S. Report* (1876), pp. 41-42; also H. G. Wadlin, *Public Library of the City of Boston: A History* (Boston, 1911), p. xix; Massachusetts, *Acts and Resolves*, 1837, chap. 34.



of Rhode Island were the best managed and most important. Here, again, the movement owed its progress to another great educator, Henry Barnard, who, as commissioner of public schools, gave it his vigorous support. By 1849, libraries of the school-district type had been established in all but four towns in the state. The Rhode Island libraries were larger than those of New York, averaging nearly six hundred volumes each in size. They were open to all persons resident in the town, but apparently were not absolutely free since a fee of one cent a week for the use of books was charged.<sup>46</sup>

Among the middle western states, Michigan was easily the most important in this development. Backed by the unique provision in its first constitution of 1835 for the establishment of public libraries and by its equally unique system of penal fine support for libraries, school-district libraries increased rapidly after the passage of the first law on this subject in 1837.<sup>47</sup> As in New York, the financial support of the libraries was inadequate, amounting to a permissive appropriation of ten dollars a year for each district, plus the district's share of the penal fines, which was ordinarily not large. The district libraries in Michigan encountered most of the same difficulties which were apparent in New York. However, in its essentials the system has survived until the present day, and the numerous modern school-district libraries of the state are based on it.<sup>48</sup>

By 1850, then, the idea of giving library service through the mechanism of the school districts had made much headway in New York, Michigan, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. Although the system as a whole established the principle of free libraries, it was destined to give way in the main to another system in which public libraries were to be maintained by cities and towns rather than by school districts. Beginning with much promise in most states, it either died out completely or became

<sup>46</sup> Jewett, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>47</sup> Michigan, Board of Library Commissioners, *Legislative History of Township Libraries in the State of Michigan from 1835 to 1901* (Lansing, 1902).

<sup>48</sup> See pp. 125-26.



solely a school-library movement, although there were important exceptions such as that just noted in the case of Michigan.

*Early county libraries in Indiana.*<sup>49</sup>—The first constitution of Indiana, adopted in 1816, considerably before that of Michigan, also contained a provision concerning libraries. It authorized the establishment of "library companies" at the county seat of each new county, to be supported by the proceeds of 10 per cent of the sale of town lots. This constitutional authorization was promptly followed by special acts permitting particular counties to establish county libraries and by general legislation to the same effect, passed in 1824. These laws provided that the people of each county should elect a library board to manage the libraries. The boards were declared to be corporate bodies and given broad powers in the management of the libraries. Not until 1847 was any provision made for an annual appropriation for these libraries, and the amount was then fixed at a maximum of \$25 annually. In 1852 this amount was raised to a minimum of \$20 and a maximum of \$75.

These provisions are of much historical interest, but it is difficult to estimate the actual importance of the county libraries. Apparently they were largely unsuccessful, and the law was not imitated in other states. In 1849 Jewett was able to report positively about only two such libraries, although several others were believed to exist.<sup>50</sup> Indiana later stressed township and school-district libraries and the county-library plan had to be revived by entirely new legislation.

*Early town libraries in New England.*—Even before 1850 a few isolated examples of town libraries supported in one way or another by public funds were to be found in New England. Among these early libraries there is considerable rivalry for the honor of first establishment. Without attempting to settle this

<sup>49</sup> J. P. Dunn, "Libraries of Indiana," *Library Occurrent*, X (1931), 3, 5; Indiana Public Library Commission, *Fourth Biennial Report*, 1904-6, pp. 73-81; H. C. Long, *County Library Service* (Chicago, 1925), pp. 15-16; Indiana, *Laws*, 1816, chap. 44; Indiana, *Special Acts*, 1818, chap. 44; Indiana, *Laws*, 1825, chap. 30; Indiana, *Constitution*, 1816, art. ix, sec. 5.

<sup>50</sup> Jewett, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

difficult point, a brief statement may be made about some of these early cases of public support of libraries.

In 1803 a library for children was established by private benevolence at Salisbury, Connecticut, and this later received occasional grants from the town. It was perhaps the first example of municipal aid to a library in the United States.<sup>51</sup> In 1827 the town of Castine, Maine, purchased all the shares of a social library originally established in 1801, and after the purchase regularly granted funds to support and increase the library and also to pay the librarian and other costs of administration.<sup>52</sup>

Perhaps the best-known and most significant of these early examples is that of Peterborough, New Hampshire. This town, in 1833, with deliberate purpose, organized a free circulating library, chose a library committee to manage it, and appropriated money for its support from its share of the state "literary fund," obtained from a tax on the capital stock of banks and divided among the towns for the use of schools or "other purposes of education." The average annual expenses of this library from the beginning exceeded \$100 a year, and the library has continued until the present day.<sup>53</sup>

Orange, Massachusetts, in 1846, voted \$100 to establish a town library and has supported a public library since that date.<sup>54</sup> Apparently, no legal question was raised in this town as it was in the town of Wayland, also in Massachusetts, which accepted a gift of \$500 for a library in 1848, but levied only an optional tax for its support because it was pointed out that no legal authority for the levy of such a tax existed. It was at the instance of a member of the General Court from Wayland that the first general public library law of Massachusetts was passed in 1851.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *U.S. Report* (1876), p. 45.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 446.

<sup>53</sup> Albert Smith, *History of the Town of Peterborough, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire* (Boston, 1876), pp. 114, 118; J. F. Brennan, "Peterborough Town Library: The Pioneer Public Library," *Granite Monthly*, XXVIII (1900), 281-91.

<sup>54</sup> *U.S. Report* (1876), p. 447.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 448.

*Founding of the Boston Public Library.*—In the decade of the 1840's, then, the stage was set for the foundation of the first important municipal public library, and the scene now shifts to Boston, a city proud to call itself the "first literary city in the Union."<sup>56</sup> So many and so varied were the influences at work at this period that the establishment of a great free library seems to have been almost inevitable. Its founding and its early history merit examination because this library truly followed "untried paths" and established precedents which were bound to influence other cities. The example of Boston was of the utmost importance in determining the manner in which the American public library was to be governed, and this fact was fully realized by those responsible for the form of its organization.<sup>57</sup>

Basically, the need and the desire for public library facilities were due to the general awakening in the intellectual life of the nation which was such an important social fact in the first half of the nineteenth century. A variety of forces and interests were cumulating in the desire for a wider distribution of the values obtainable from books and reading than was possible through a limited system of privately supported subscription libraries. Although the backgrounds of cultural development in America were largely aristocratic, there was apparent in this period a decided broadening in the base of popular interest in intellectual concerns. The "common man" was definitely emerging as a factor to be reckoned with in every good thing in American life.

Of all the forces at work, probably the most important was the steady development of free tax-supported public education. The growth of the school system of the country naturally was an important influence in enlarging the capacity of the younger generation to enjoy and profit by the use of the printed page. Further, the steady increase in the number of colleges and universities, each with its own library and with the more widely

<sup>56</sup> Wadlin, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xx, 9.

used libraries of its literary societies, also provided a rapidly spreading leaven of interest in books.

But the intellectual renaissance was by no means a wholly formal thing, connected only with schools and colleges. In many ways popular interest in a wide range of subjects was manifesting itself. Literary and debating societies flourished greatly. Lecture courses, fostered by the almost phenomenal growth of the Lyceum movement after its beginning in 1826, were a most important agency for the education of adults. Further, appreciation of the fine arts—music, painting, sculpture, and architecture—was steadily advancing. At the same time there was a new interest in science and in its practical applications.

Moreover, American literature was coming into its own. To the already great interest in the work of English and European authors there was now added an equal interest in the current writings of the New England and other literary groups in America. The volume of American book publication was rapidly increasing in the great publishing centers of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, and the literary rivalry of these cities was keen.

In the pursuit of all these and other similar interests books were indispensable, and the steady growth of social and other libraries was therefore merely a part of a larger whole. Altogether the time was ripe for the beginning of a popular library movement on broad lines.<sup>58</sup>

More specifically, there can be no doubt that the founders of the Boston Public Library, like the founders of the New York district libraries, conceived of the public library as a natural and essential continuation of the public school system. In their preliminary report of 1852 the first Board of Trustees said: "We consider that a large public library is of the utmost importance as the means of completing our system of public education."<sup>59</sup>

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xviii. For a general survey of intellectual developments in this period see C. R. Fish, *The Rise of the Common Man, 1830-1850* (New York, 1927).

<sup>59</sup> Boston Public Library, [*Preliminary*] *Report* (July, 1852), p. 9 (City Document No. 37, 1852).



And in the first annual report they foresaw that the library "is destined to grow up into an establishment second only to our schools, as a means of promoting the great cause of popular education." "In fact," they went on to say, "it should be viewed as a part of the same system."<sup>60</sup> Edward Everett, later the first president of the Trustees, in a letter to Mayor Bigelow in 1850 asserted that "such a library would put the finishing hand to that system of public education that lies at the basis of the prosperity of Boston and with her benevolent institutions gives her so much of her name and praise in the land."<sup>61</sup> Everywhere this notion was stressed.

On a somewhat higher level there was a widespread feeling, well expressed by the historian Justin Winsor, superintendent of the Boston Public Library, that "it was certainly now high time that something should be done to enable American scholars to pursue studies in a creditable way."<sup>62</sup> The favorite example of the day was that Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* could not have been written in America because of the lack of resources in the libraries of the country.<sup>63</sup>

Off and on, during nearly the whole decade of 1840 to 1850, the city officials considered the idea of a public library for Boston. Finally, as the result of the activity of a Joint Special Committee of the City Council, the project was approved by the Council, and the General Court of the state on March 18, 1848, passed a very brief special act permitting the city of Boston to establish a public library. This was the first state law in America authorizing the establishment of a municipal public library.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Boston Public Library, [*First*] *Annual Report*, 1853, p. 7.

<sup>61</sup> Wadlin, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>62</sup> Justin Winsor, "Libraries in Boston," in his *Memorial History of Boston* (Boston, 1881), IV, 286.

<sup>63</sup> See unsigned articles in *North American Review*, XLV (1837), 137; LXXI (1856), 186-87.

<sup>64</sup> Wadlin, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-11; also Massachusetts, *Acts and Resolves*, 1848, chap. 52. Of course, the Indiana county library law and the various school-district library laws antedated this law.



Because of the size and importance of the particular city in question, it was most decidedly another milestone in library history.

What form was the government of this new addition to the activities of the city of Boston to take? The importance of the answer to this question, locally and nationally, has already been emphasized. Neither the special act of 1848 nor the general library law of Massachusetts of 1851<sup>65</sup> set up any governmental machinery for the library. Both merely authorized the city to establish the library under such regulations as the council might determine. In general, two choices were open to the council in carrying out the provisions of the law. One was to retain the library directly under its own control in charge of a single administrative officer; the other was to turn its administration over more or less fully to some sort of a board.

Analysis of the functions performed by the government of the city of Boston in 1850 shows numerous examples of both kinds of administration. Not incorporated as a city until 1822, the municipal government was typically diffused and decentralized and had grown up without a real plan by adding one function at a time. The large bicameral council maintained supervision over the activities of the city through a complicated array of no less than thirty-three committees, each devoted to a particular governmental service. Josiah Quincy, Sr. (1772-1864), had established the tradition of a strong mayor through the force of his own personality rather than through formal legal powers vested in his office. The group of individual administrators of departments comprised about a dozen major officials and a number of lesser ones. Of the board type of administration there were six examples, including five appointed boards and the elected School Committee.<sup>66</sup>

At the outset efforts were made to induce the Boston Athenae-

<sup>65</sup> Massachusetts, *Acts and Resolves*, 1851, chap. 305.

<sup>66</sup> Boston, *Municipal Register*, 1853; J. M. Bugbee, *The City Government of Boston* ("Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science," 5th ser., Vol. III [March, 1887]); C. W. Ernst, *Constitutional History of Boston, Massachusetts* (Boston, 1894).

um to make its library accessible to the public, but the shareholders rejected the proposal.<sup>67</sup> After this possibility had been eliminated, the city settled down to work out the organization of the new library as a strictly municipal affair. At first a Joint Special Committee of the City Council dealt with the question, and later five citizens were added to form the first Board of Trustees of the library.<sup>68</sup> It is significant that in this group the mayor, four of the five citizen trustees, and five of the seven council members were proprietors of the Athenaeum.<sup>69</sup> It was almost a foregone conclusion that they would propose a form of organization somewhat comparable to that of the library which they knew best. Eventually their recommendations took official shape in an ordinance passed October 14, 1852, which provided that the "general care and control" of the library should be vested in a Board of Trustees composed of one alderman, one member of the Common Council, and five citizens chosen annually by concurrent vote of the combined City Council. By the terms of this ordinance the trustees were specifically given power to control all expenditures of library funds, to make rules and regulations for the use of the library, and to appoint subordinate officers and fix their compensation. The one concession (and it was important) made to the prevailing idea of checks and balances in governmental organization was that the librarian was to be appointed annually by the City Council and his salary fixed by that body.<sup>70</sup>

This ordinance, though it contained the seeds of later conflict, definitely committed the city to the board plan of management for its public library and afforded an example of national importance which was to be followed in city after city and town after town as new public libraries were founded. Even more decisive than the exact letter of the law was the appointment of a

<sup>67</sup> Quincy, *op. cit.*, pp. 198, 204-5; Wadlin, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>68</sup> Wadlin, *op. cit.*, pp. 6, 30-31.

<sup>69</sup> See Quincy, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-63, for list of Athenaeum proprietors.

<sup>70</sup> Text of ordinance in Boston, *Municipal Register*, 1853, pp. 80-81.

group of distinguished citizens as trustees. Again, four out of five were Athenaeum proprietors. Led by George Ticknor and Edward Everett, they proceeded energetically to formulate a policy for the library and to organize its work. Undoubtedly the real leader of the Board was Ticknor. Although himself an aristocrat and a great scholar, he showed in his disinterested and zealous work for the library conspicuous liberality and a definite desire to popularize its work in every way. Under a weak board, results might have been greatly different, both as to form of government and as to the general policy of the library.<sup>71</sup>

With such a board it was almost inevitable that conflicts with the City Council should arise. The next twenty-five years of the governmental history of the Library may be summarized as a battle on the part of the trustees for complete independence from Council control. Almost immediately the conflict centered about the appointment of a superintendent of outstanding ability and qualifications to supersede the original librarian named by the Council. This objective was attained by the appointment of Charles C. Jewett, librarian of the Smithsonian Institution, one of the most prominent librarians of his day. But not until 1870 was the librarian's tenure made permanent, rather than an annually renewed appointment.<sup>72</sup>

A still more acute situation arose in 1877, when interference by the Council in regulating certain library salaries cost the Library the services of Justin Winsor, then its superintendent, who resigned to become librarian of Harvard University.<sup>73</sup> Finally, as the result of pressure by the Examining Committee of the Library, as well as by the trustees themselves, the issue was decided in favor of practically complete independence by the passage in 1878 of a special statute of the General Court, which formally incorporated the "Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston," gave them full powers over the Library and its property, and increased their term of office to five

<sup>71</sup> Wadlin, *op. cit.*, *passim*. See also "The Boston Public Library," *Scribner's Monthly*, III (1871), 150-56. Article probably written by Justin Winsor.

<sup>72</sup> Wadlin, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-74.

<sup>73</sup> Winsor, *op. cit.*, IV, 292.

years.<sup>74</sup> Thus to the tradition of management of the Library by a Board of Trustees, Boston added the further tradition of broad powers and virtual independence of the Board in its administration of the Library.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY  
MOVEMENT, 1850-1934

The governmental history of the library movement subsequent to 1850 may best be treated as a phase of the development of municipal government in general. It will be most convenient to divide this section into two chronological periods, the first covering approximately the years 1850-90 and the second from 1890 to the present.

*Early library government, 1850-90.*—After the passage of the law authorizing the establishment of the Boston Public Library, there came an immediate acceleration in the movement for free libraries. In the period between 1850 and 1875, the official statistics of the Bureau of Education show that 257 public libraries were established, of which considerably more than half were in Massachusetts.<sup>75</sup>

Undoubtedly the organization of these early libraries, as well as the present form of public library government, was largely determined by the background we have already sketched and by the normal course of municipal affairs during the last half of the nineteenth century, a period well described as one of "change without progress."<sup>76</sup> In this period the state had begun to exercise extensively its constitutional right to complete control over local government. The natural result was a great increase in piecemeal special legislation providing for new services as they arose—a tendency which reached its peak in the period 1850-80.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Massachusetts, *Acts and Resolves*, 1878, chap. 114.

<sup>75</sup> *U.S. Report* (1876), pp. 788-89.

<sup>76</sup> T. H. Reed, *Municipal Government in the United States*, (rev. ed.; New York, 1934), p. 72.

<sup>77</sup> William Anderson, *American City Government* (New York, 1925), pp. 43-44.



To this trend the public library conformed in large measure at the outset. Numbers of the libraries established at an early date were governed by special laws. Some of these laws were enacted, as was the case in Boston, prior to the passage of general state legislation for libraries;<sup>78</sup> others were passed subsequently. However, the relatively early passage of general laws for the establishment of libraries made special legislation largely unnecessary, although it was still freely used to provide for many cases which seemed to be unusual.

It is well known that this period saw the great flourishing of the board plan of administration in city government. As cities undertook new functions, it was quite the natural thing, in the loose governmental structure then prevailing, to add new boards or commissions to administer them. Thus the already well-known board-of-trustee type of library government was invariably followed, except in the few states where some of the early libraries were managed by boards of education.

Nor must it be forgotten that this period was one of such widespread corruption, graft, and inefficiency that it caused Lord Bryce to characterize our local government as a "conspicuous failure." In this respect the record of the public library appears to be almost absolutely clean, as far as evidence is now available. In a day when the spoils system ruled, and the vicious custom of rotation in office was common, the personnel of libraries seems to have been little affected. The leading librarians of the early days were often recruited from academic positions or from the social libraries. The reputations of such early library leaders as Jewett, Winsor, Poole, Crunden, and others are outstanding in comparison with the rather common average of mediocrity and sheer inefficiency in municipal service. Possibly the libraries were financially too poor and their salaries too low to attract the interest of the spoilsman, but at any rate they escaped his touch. The librarian's characteristic fear of politics, born in this unsavory period of municipal history, has had a

<sup>78</sup> Examples: Toledo (1873), Los Angeles (1874), Milwaukee (1878), Enoch Pratt, Baltimore (1882).



powerful influence in determining his point of view regarding the governmental organization of the public library.

As free library service became more common, the field of the social library obviously became less and less important. Nevertheless, in the period 1850-75 the number of new social libraries established exceeded the number of public libraries, although they were generally smaller in size.<sup>79</sup> The natural thing was for the social libraries to combine with the new public libraries. This occurred so often that it can be said that a large portion of the present-day public libraries may trace their history back to some form of association or subscription library. Of the first twenty-five free libraries established in Massachusetts, for instance, seventeen absorbed one or more preceding social libraries in various ways, some as outright gifts, some by purchase, and some as more or less permanent loans.<sup>80</sup> In not a few cases strong proprietary libraries actually assumed the functions of public libraries, with the town or city agreeing to grant them appropriations from public funds. Of the private subscription libraries, a considerable number still survive and are rendering excellent service to their members. Among these are most of the libraries cited as examples in the earlier part of this chapter.

*Development of library legislation.*—Main reliance in the systematic founding of new public libraries came gradually to be placed on state library laws of a general nature. In the main these were of two kinds: (1) those affecting school-district libraries and (2) those authorizing the establishment of town or city libraries. Laws concerning the first type remained on the statute-books and continued to be passed after 1850, although contemporary library accounts admit that these libraries were largely failures.<sup>81</sup> However, it is only fair to state that a number of public libraries in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and other states were organized under the authority of school boards and that

<sup>79</sup> *U.S. Report* (1876), pp. 788-89.

<sup>80</sup> See Massachusetts Free Public Library Commission, *Ninth Report*, 1899.

<sup>81</sup> W. F. Poole, "State Legislation in the Matter of Libraries," *Library Journal*, II (1877), 7.

this form of library was destined to undergo a partial renaissance at a later date.<sup>82</sup>

But much more popular was the newer type of law which connected the library with the city or the town. The earliest example of this sort was the law passed by New Hampshire in 1849,<sup>83</sup> which became the model for a considerable group of imitators. This type of law came to be known as the "short" law, because it provided in the simplest possible form that any city or town might establish a library under such rules and regulations as the town meeting or the city council might direct. Although this law apparently provided for the widest latitude in the manner in which the library might be managed, all local units seem to have followed the now standardized plan of board control.

Contrasted with this short form of law was the "long" law of the type passed by Illinois in 1872.<sup>84</sup> This law put into legal form the common preferences of public library authorities in the matter of government. It made the appointment of trustees mandatory, gave them a three-year term of office, enumerated their powers in great detail, specified a separate mill tax for library purposes, and in general established the library as independent of the city council except in the one matter of levying the library tax. This law was widely copied in other states.

When we add that there was evident in this period an upward tendency in the tax limits allowed for library purposes, it is quite clear that library authorities had in general fairly successfully weathered a very difficult period in municipal history and had been able to put themselves in what appeared to be a favorable position. As far as the library world was concerned, this position had become practically official, indorsed alike by the American Library Association, the *Library Journal*, and the Bureau of Education in its reports on libraries. It remains for us to see how the libraries fared in the new era in municipal history which was beginning about 1890.

<sup>82</sup> See chap. iv.

<sup>83</sup> New Hampshire, *Laws*, 1849, chap. 861.

<sup>84</sup> Illinois, *Public Laws*, 1871-72, pp. 609-11, approved March 7, 1872.

*Library government in the period 1890-1934.*—Toward the close of the nineteenth century a real change began to appear in the government of cities, well termed a "civic renaissance."<sup>85</sup> Two tendencies in this modern period which concerned the library were the development of municipal home rule and the movement toward the reconcentration of power and responsibility in the hands of a strong central administrative authority. Home rule, as a matter of fact, had begun in Missouri in 1875, in California in 1879, and in Washington in 1889, but it was some time before its effect on the libraries began to be noticeable. Early examples of the adoption of home-rule charters which affected public libraries are to be found in the Los Angeles charter of 1889 and the Seattle charters of 1890 and 1896.<sup>86</sup> The second phase noted, the effort to reconstitute a strong central executive in American cities, took the form of the strong-mayor form of government, the commission form, and, last, the council-manager form. The first of these, apparently, had little effect on the libraries.

The rapid growth, however, of the commission plan of government after its adoption by Galveston in 1901 and by Des Moines in 1907 brought the library face to face with important changes in governmental structure. Would the board of trustees be retained in this plan, and, if so, to whom would it be responsible? From 1910 on there was a period of much concern and some confusion in certain states while conflicts between commission government laws and library laws were being adjusted.

Much of this difficulty centered in Iowa and Illinois, but in the end both states were able to secure amendments to commission government laws which in large measure reconciled them with the library laws of their respective states.<sup>87</sup> Sacramento,

<sup>85</sup> W. B. Munro, *Government of American Cities* (4th ed.; New York, 1926), p. 37.

<sup>86</sup> *The Los Angeles Public Library, 1872-1920*, p. 2; *Seattle Public Library, Annual Report*, 1915, p. 7. This subject is treated in detail in chap. ii.

<sup>87</sup> *Iowa Library Quarterly*, VI (1910-11), 86, 91, 110, 150-52; VII (1913), 17-18; *Illinois Library Extension Commission, Report* (1910-13), p. 6; *Laws of Illinois Relating to Commission Form of Government*, 1915, p. 29; 1930, p. 31; A. M. Price, "Library Ad-

California, in 1911 abolished its library board and placed the librarian under the direct authority of the commissioner of education,<sup>88</sup> and at a later date several New Jersey cities made somewhat similar provisions.<sup>89</sup> Less drastic, but nevertheless important, changes in library status took place in other cities. Though the total effect of commission government was not great, and librarians and trustees were usually successful in minimizing the amount of change, a new feeling of uncertainty and of altered conditions was in the air.<sup>90</sup>

More important were the changes caused by the introduction of the most recent pattern of city government—the council-manager form. Since its adoption in Staunton, Virginia, in 1908, it has spread to 442 cities in the United States.<sup>91</sup> As in the case of the commission plan, manager government has not altered the position of the library as much as might have been anticipated, in part because of the special legal character of many libraries. Complete overthrow of existing forms has not been common, but a steady pounding-away at the library defenses has produced noticeable results.<sup>92</sup>

Summing up on this point, we now see that the steady increase in the number of cities adopting home-rule charters or the various optional plans for city government has resulted in a considerable number of shifts in library control, particularly in commission and manager cities. Many cities in recent years have passed successively through all the forms of municipal gov-

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ministration as Affected by Commission Form of Government," *Public Libraries*, XVII (1912), 216-18.

<sup>88</sup> Sacramento, *Charter*, 1911, secs. 213-14.

<sup>89</sup> These are discussed in chap. v.

<sup>90</sup> For library viewpoint on this subject see A. S. Tyler, "Effect of the Commission Plan of City Government on Public Libraries," American Library Association, *Bulletin*, V (1911), 98-103; League of Library Commissions, Committee on Charter Provisions for Public Libraries in Home Rule or Commission Government Cities, "Report," *ibid.*, VI (1912), 316-17; American Library Association Committee on Relations between the Library and the Municipality, "Report," *ibid.*, VII (1913), 243-45.

<sup>91</sup> *Municipal Yearbook*, 1934, p. 195.

<sup>92</sup> C. B. Joeckel, "The Public Library under the City-Manager Form of Government," *Library Quarterly*, I (1931), 121-51, 301-37. General discussion in chap. v.



ernment—from mayor-council to commission to manager. As each new plan was adopted there was always the possibility of greater or less change in library status, and not infrequently it actually occurred. At first, library authorities were not always aware of the importance of the changes being made because the effect of home rule on the general state library laws was not fully understood, but the issue between separation and complete absorption is now clearly drawn and thoroughly appreciated.

This last period of public library history was characterized by the great development of official, as well as unofficial, propaganda for the promotion of library service. This took the form of the establishment of state library commissions or other agencies organized to assist in the founding of libraries and in the improvement of their service. Beginning about 1890, this extension movement developed rapidly and was a most important factor in the more recent increase in the number of public library units, which reached a total of more than six thousand in 1932.<sup>93</sup>

Another important characteristic of later-day library extension was the attempt to enlarge the unit of library service. For fifty years the library movement was almost wholly confined to cities and towns, and its rural aspects did not assume great importance until the beginning of the county library movement about 1900. Since that date library extension and county library development have generally been closely associated.

All this expansion in the extent of library service was accompanied, of course, by mounting costs of operation. In this respect the library merely conformed to the great upward swing in the cost of local government in general. In cities of over 30,000 population library operating expenses increased from \$4,173,512 in 1905 to \$28,971,936 in 1930. This is a large sum in absolute figures. Annual per capita expenditures for library operation, likewise, increased from nineteen to sixty-one cents. But it is worthy of special note that, relatively, the library mere-

<sup>93</sup> See Table XIV, pp. 321-22.



ly kept exactly in step with the growth of other municipal expenditures. Throughout this quarter-century period the ratio of library expenditures to total municipal expenditures remained practically constant at 1.3 per cent.<sup>94</sup> Occasionally individual libraries greatly improved their financial position, but in general the library simply held its place in the municipal sun.

#### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LIBRARY MOVEMENT

To this governmental survey of the development of the public library there must be added, to complete the picture, a few observations concerning certain general characteristics of the library movement which are not strictly of a governmental nature but are nevertheless important to the understanding of the library's position as a public function.

As will be seen in the following chapter, library service has never been made wholly mandatory. Its adoption has been voluntary and usually based on a more or less positively expressed popular desire for book service. Often there has been apathy, but at no time in the history of American libraries has there been really serious public opposition to the library idea. When elections were necessary for establishment, the early libraries were usually founded by rather one-sided votes.<sup>95</sup> Perhaps the most serious test of public interest has come very recently in the days of grave financial difficulties in local government.

Another obvious but important point is that the library has been free. The principal difference between the social library and the public library was that the latter was absolutely free, and this point has been strongly emphasized throughout its whole history. There has developed in the public mind a concept of free library service which extends far beyond the mere question of dollars and cents. Protests against rental collections in libraries have been numerous, and the imposition of non-resident fees or service charges, even though fully justified, has

<sup>94</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Financial Statistics of Cities Having a Population of over 30,000*, 1905, p. 303; 1930, pp. 53, 400.

<sup>95</sup> *U.S. Report* (1876), p. 456.

met with large decreases in library use. On this subject the word of a leading librarian, in reporting on a recent experiment in the use of service charges, may be quoted: "Do not forget the weight of tradition of the American tax-supported public library, 'free to all' and therein a source of pride to all good citizens and a blessing to many."<sup>96</sup>

Steady improvement in the quality of library personnel is also to be noted as an outstanding feature of American public library history. While professionalization of library staffs has not been complete, there has been a marked tendency in this direction,<sup>97</sup> caused by great increases in the number of library schools and their graduates. Most of the large libraries and many of the smaller ones have carefully graded and organized their staffs. In a few states legal recognition of the necessity for qualified librarians has been given in the form of certification laws, but this development is as yet in a preliminary stage. The civil service movement, which played so important a part in the efforts for civic reform in American cities, has affected public library staffs only in a relatively small number of cities. In general, most of the public libraries have not been placed under civil service control and have relied on other means of personnel improvement.<sup>98</sup>

But the library movement has not been wholly one of professional librarians. From the outset there has been a strong leaven of amateur interest, provided by the trustee, and the history of the American public library cannot be fully understood without due regard for this fact. The Trustees Section of the American Library Association, organized in 1890, and similar sections in many state library associations, have stimulated the interest of the trustee in the library and have helped to focus his attention on the salient problems of library administration. The part played by the trustee should not be overestimated, but its general importance cannot be doubted.

<sup>96</sup> See chap. ix, p. 289; Detroit Public Library, *Report*, 1932-33, pp. 7-8.

<sup>97</sup> L. D. White, "Politics and Civil Service," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, CLXIX (1933), 87.

<sup>98</sup> See pp. 213-14.

Opportunism is the keyword which most nearly summarizes the governmental history of the library during the century in which it has been a public service. The primary interest of the trustee and of the librarian has been concentrated on the achievement of tangible results in the performance of this service. They have earnestly and altruistically endeavored to do a good job. Because of this very absorption in a dominant motive they have been interested only to a limited extent in questions relating to the logical form and structure of library government. Such matters have seemed important only in so far as they might strengthen or weaken the position of the library in carrying on its work. The main concern has been that the ability of the library to give service should not be jeopardized by the threat of political control of its administration or by too great limitation of its budget. When structure has interfered with the attainment of their objectives the friends of libraries have sought to change it; when it has seemed to protect the best interests of the library, they have endeavored to maintain and consolidate the advantages gained. The degree of success attained in these efforts has varied greatly from state to state and city to city. Of necessity the resultant picture, when viewed by the detached observer, is often illogical, irregular, and confused. The librarian himself, on the other hand, is more likely to cherish these individual variations because each one has meant something definite in the history of the library.

## CHAPTER II

### LEGAL BASIS OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

THE key to the almost innumerable variations in the form of public library government existing in the United States today is to be found in the legal nature of the library itself and in its relations to local and state governments. Some examination of the body of law on which the library is founded is therefore essential before detailed consideration of the different types of library organization may profitably be undertaken. Such an analysis must not be regarded as of purely legalistic significance, interesting merely as a matter of form. On the contrary, it should be emphasized that the fundamental governmental structure of the library will in large measure determine not only its present effectiveness but also the course of its future development.

This purpose may best be accomplished by a systematic discussion of the relation of the library to the different levels of the American complex of government—federal, state, and local, with special emphasis on the last since it has been of most importance to the library. Many of the library's legal difficulties are traceable directly to the failure to understand fully how the position of the library is affected by the different systems of law under which the nation as a whole, the forty-eight states, and the multitude of lesser local units are governed. All of this, to be sure, is not a matter of law alone, but just as fully a question of the relative importance assumed by the various parts of the system at different periods and in different states.

#### THE LIBRARY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The question of the relationship of the library to the national government may be looked at from two sharply contrasted

points of view. Considered solely as a matter of law, the very federal form of the American union makes direct control of local affairs by the central government impossible. The forty-eight states are the reservoirs of all power. On the one hand, they have turned over to the federal government important functions of a general nature; on the other, they have granted widely varying powers of local self-government to cities and other subordinate units.<sup>1</sup> It is clear, therefore, that there is no direct manner in which the federal government may affect the actual form of library organization and administration.

*Federal laws and services affecting libraries.*—This is all the more apparent when it is recalled that the Constitution of the United States has nothing whatever to say about cities or other agencies of local government<sup>2</sup> and, of course, nothing about libraries. Nor are there any federal statutes regarding the organization or administration of libraries. Federal laws which affect public library interests are concerned with such matters as the free importation of books, the distribution of various kinds of government documents, free transportation of books for the blind, and reduced postal rates for books loaned by libraries.<sup>3</sup> Thus the library must look to the state, and not to the nation, as the ultimate source from which it draws its powers and as the authority which prescribes its form.

The foregoing pronouncement is easily made, but it does not tell the whole story. Whether we like it or not, we are living today in a period of rapidly changing governmental relationships. From the point of view of actual fact, everyone knows that the powers of the federal government are in a stage of rapid expansion and are affecting local affairs at many points.<sup>4</sup> Some

<sup>1</sup> Eugene McQuillin, *Law of Municipal Corporations* (2d ed.; Chicago, 1928), I, 250.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, Legislative Reference Service, *Index to Federal Statutes, 1874-1931* (Washington, 1933), p. 573.

<sup>4</sup> P. V. Betters, "The Federal Government and the Cities," *Municipal Year Book*, 1934, pp. 33-36; *Federal Services to Municipal Governments* (New York, 1931); L. D. White, *Trends in Public Administration* (New York, 1933), pp. 20-32.



observers go so far as to say that "tremendous changes" are taking place in the relation of the city to the nation.<sup>5</sup>

Already the federal government is doing many things which are of specific importance to libraries. Any attempt to compile a complete list of federal functions which are of direct or indirect benefit to public libraries would be almost futile because of the extent to which it might be carried. Among the principal activities of this sort the following may be singled out: a wide variety of bibliographic services, a system of interlibrary loans, supplying documentary material in large amounts free or at low cost, an invaluable system of printed catalog-card distribution, as well as other technical services, and the collection of library statistics. All of these are in addition to the above-mentioned privileges granted to libraries.

*Possibilities of federal aid to libraries.*—But because of the importance of the general trend toward increased federal influence on local affairs, it is only natural that special interest should be aroused in the prospect of even more tangible benefits to libraries from federal sources. Most alluring is the possibility of direct federal subsidies or grants-in-aid.<sup>6</sup> The recent positive examples of assistance to many libraries through a wide range of special Civil Works Administration and similar projects have afforded a concrete demonstration of what federal aid might mean to the hard-pressed local library. If federal grants are to be made on anything except a largely haphazard emergency basis, careful planning and the adoption of a considered policy are highly essential. As a suggestion, it might be urged that the federal government concern itself actively with the equalization of the present marked differences in library service throughout the nation, particularly through grants-in-aid to libraries in actual

<sup>5</sup> E.g., H. D. Smith, *Local Government and the New Deal* ("You and Your Government Series," VII, No. 11 [1934]), p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Glenn Holloway, "Rural Libraries and Federal Aid," *American Library Association, Bulletin*, XXV (Chicago, 1931), 18-21; J. O. Modisette, "Federal Aid for Libraries," *ibid.*, XXIV (1930), 692-93; C. B. Joeckel, "Federal Relations to Libraries," *ibid.*, XXIX (1935), 60-63; C. B. Lester, "The Need for Federal Aid," *ibid.*, XXIX (1935), 64-66.

need, or in widening the field of library service to areas now without it by allotments to county or regional libraries.<sup>7</sup> At the moment, direct federal aid to libraries on a large and comprehensive scale is a new and somewhat revolutionary proposal. However, any realistic appraisal of the present stage of development reached by the American public library seems to indicate clearly that only through generous federal assistance can real equalization of book service be achieved throughout the nation.

All federal grants for public library service should be made through the library extension agencies of the various states in accordance with plans submitted by these agencies and approved by the federal library authority. Only through the active co-operation of both authorities can adequate planning on a state- and nation-wide basis be assured. Unless strong and efficiently managed state agencies exist, any federal subsidy is likely to degenerate into a mere dole to existing libraries, without adequate supervision and co-ordination of efforts in any far-reaching project to advance the extent and quality of library service. Moreover, a plan of the sort suggested would permit wide variations in the manner in which federal subsidies might be used in the different states. A single uniform pattern is not likely to fit all parts of the country. A project well suited to the development of libraries in the South, for example, may be quite unsuited to the geography, local government, and library traditions of New England. Therefore state and local initiative and experimentation suited to the needs of particular states and regions should be encouraged.

Furthermore, if federal aid to libraries should ever become an actuality, it will almost surely bring with it a certain amount of federal supervision through approval of projects and inspection of results. The federal government may also insist on certain specifications as to standards of service which must be maintained. Requirements of this sort are entirely in line with the

<sup>7</sup> See pp. 317-20.

past practice of the federal government in making grants to the states.<sup>8</sup>

Beyond this point, federal control of library administration is probably unlikely to go. Merely as a matter of law and of government, it is almost impossible to conceive of the extension of federal authority to the control and management of individual public libraries or library systems. In our form of federal government these powers are clearly matters of state and local concern. Only by a wholly unreasonable use of the power of the purse could the national government interfere directly in the management of individual libraries, and then only by the bait of extremely large subsidies. Furthermore, the whole history of federal aid clearly shows that the national government in the use of federal funds has uniformly acted through state and local agencies.

The adoption of the correct principles to be used in determining the amount of federal aid to the several states is a problem of much difficulty. Presumably the federal government would not be satisfied with mere subsidies, granted without conditions to all the states on equal terms.<sup>9</sup> To insure wise use of federal funds three fundamental stipulations seem to be essential: (1) that actual need for aid be established, (2) that matching of federal funds to a greater or less extent be required, and (3) that reasonable standards of service be maintained.<sup>10</sup> The use of these principles would doubtless result in the development of a formula in which the per capita wealth of the state and the proportion of the state's population now without library service would be factors. The net result of the application of such a formula would be that in a state low in per capita wealth and with few libraries, a lower ratio of local or state matching of federal funds would be required than in a more wealthy state

<sup>8</sup> National Municipal League, Committee on Federal Aid to the States, "Report," *National Municipal Review*, XVII (1928), 619-59; A. F. Macdonald, *Federal Aid* (New York, 1928).

<sup>9</sup> G. F. Milton and A. B. Hall, *The National Administration and Local Reorganization* ("You and Your Government Series," VII, No. 16 [1934]), p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> In this connection a requirement for adequate personnel through state-wide certification or other means might be made.

with many libraries. Thus the basic principle of need would be emphasized, but aid would not be refused to states or cities which had built up good library service by their own efforts.

Two specific suggestions with reference to the possible development of federal interest in libraries may not be out of place by way of conclusion to this section. Both are concerned with an attempt to correlate the library interests of the nation in accordance with a broadly conceived plan. In a sense both are beyond the scope of this study, but their importance warrants brief mention.

*A federal library agency.*—The federal government has very naturally left the field of public library extension and supervision in the hands of the states. No federal agency is specifically charged with this duty. The nature of our government, already discussed, probably makes such an authority unnecessary in a form comparable to that of the typical state library commission or other agency of extension. However, for a somewhat different purpose, a federal library authority might have a very definite place. It would be charged with the formulation of plans for the co-ordination and correlation of library service on a national scale. It should not attempt to invade the province of the states in actual propaganda for the extension of public library service. On the contrary, its primary functions would be to foster co-operation on a regional basis and to systematize the collection, storage, and use of printed materials. Such a program, it should be added, ought not to be limited to public libraries but should embrace important libraries of every kind. The federal library agency would actively interest itself in interstate regional relationships among libraries, in the formulation of definite agreements between libraries with reference to special collections and "sponsorship for knowledge" in particular fields, in uniform legislation for libraries, and in the systematic collection of statistics concerning libraries. Further, this authority would naturally supervise and direct any system of federal aid to libraries, and this might easily become the most concrete and specific of its functions.



Whether such an agency as that just suggested should take the form of an independent commission or should be made a part of the Library of Congress or of the Office of Education need not be discussed in detail here. Each of these methods would have certain advantages. It is also evident that active co-operation between the federal library agency and the American Library Association would be highly desirable. The Association itself might undertake some of the activities mentioned, but in the long run federal action would probably prove more effective. The important point is not so much what authority is charged with this responsibility as that the work actually be undertaken and that it be broadly conceived. The interposition of forty-eight states between the federal government and individual libraries makes any closely organized system of libraries under a central authority, such as that of France, for example, impossible in the United States. In spite of this difficulty, active and organized co-operation by libraries on a national basis should not be impossible of achievement.

The plain fact of the matter is that there is in the United States relatively little effective library planning or leadership at the national level. To leave this important field wholly to the unofficial co-operation of libraries is not enough. An official federal agency or bureau of the sort suggested, even though it had no actual administrative power over the libraries of the various states, might well acquire sufficient prestige to enable it to carry out a program of nation-wide importance.

*Regional reservoir libraries.*—Closely allied to what has just been said is the suggestion for regional reservoir libraries, planned both for the distribution of books and printed materials and also for their storage on a scale hitherto scarcely approached. A system of perhaps a dozen such libraries, strategically located in important regions throughout the country, is even now badly needed and in a few years will become an urgent necessity. Reservoir libraries of this kind need not necessarily be independent institutions; more often than not their functions might be undertaken by existing libraries with federal assistance. In



every instance, however, storage warehouses for books in great numbers will almost inevitably be required.

It is possible that some states may wish to assume this responsibility directly. At the present time a number of the state libraries are performing this function satisfactorily as far as distribution is concerned; but almost none are in a position to act as reservoirs. Moreover, many state libraries are now, and perhaps always will be, too weak to carry out either of these services at all adequately. If a carefully planned system of regional libraries could be developed under national auspices, it would be unnecessary to build up strong libraries for this purpose in every state.

This system should be extensive enough to provide for the needs of libraries and readers of every sort. All libraries, governmental and private alike, would be able to store their surplus stocks in the central reservoirs, which would be responsible for their preservation or for their reallotment to other libraries when desirable. New books would be purchased in sufficient numbers to provide for the needs of students and general readers unable to secure needed material in their local libraries; in this respect the service would be similar to that of the National Central Library in Great Britain.<sup>11</sup> Only through such a group of libraries, liberally aided by federal funds, will it be possible to conserve and co-ordinate in adequate fashion the book resources of the nation.

#### LEGAL RELATION OF THE LIBRARY TO STATE AND CITY

After thus briefly noting that the federal government does not in any direct manner control the form of library organization, it would appear fairly simple to continue with an orderly consideration, first, of the relation of the library to the state, and, second, to the city or other local government. Unfortunately it is not as simple as it seems.

The whole history of library legislation clearly shows that the framers of state library laws felt that they were establishing

<sup>11</sup> *The Year's Work in Librarianship*, III (London, 1930), 136-38.

more or less uniform systems of public library government and that the power of the state in library matters was undisputed. Actually, however, in many states this is not the case, and other states have not chosen to prescribe in detail the manner in which library service shall be organized. Before proceeding, therefore, with a discussion of state library laws, it is necessary to consider the question whether public library service is an "affair" or "concern" of the state or of the city. This involves the complicated question of municipal home rule and its effect on the status of the public library.

*The city and the state.*—The American city, it must be remembered, is the creature of the state. We talk much about our rights and privileges in the management of local affairs, but it is a commonplace in the study of the form of American institutions that there is no "inherent right of local self-government."<sup>12</sup> Whatever powers the local unit possesses must be conferred upon it by the state through the constitution and by legislation. Both of these, of course, are subject to interpretation by the courts, which in this instance is almost as important as the law itself. The state may create municipal corporations of all kinds and may determine the nature and extent of their powers.<sup>13</sup>

These powers may be conferred upon the cities by means of general laws of incorporation applying to all cities, by special laws applying to particular cities, by optional charter forms from which cities may select, or by means of home-rule charters.<sup>14</sup> It is with the last method that we are most concerned because of its important effect on the form of library organization.

Sixteen of the states have adopted constitutional amendments, usually accompanied by important enabling acts, which permit all their cities, or all those over a certain size, to draft

<sup>12</sup> J. F. Dillon, *Commentaries on the Law of Municipal Corporations* (5th ed.; Boston, 1911), I, 154.

<sup>13</sup> C. B. Elliott, *Principles of the Law of Municipal Corporations* (3d ed. rev.; Chicago, 1925), p. 20.

<sup>14</sup> McQuillin, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, chap. iii; W. B. Munro, "The City as a Municipal Corporation," *Public Management*, XI (1929), 577-80.

their own charters.<sup>15</sup> In brief, the effect of the granting of this privilege has probably been to increase the number of variations in the forms of municipal government, since each home-rule city frames its own charter in its own way. The specific bearing of municipal charters on the status of libraries is considered later in this chapter. Very often the constitutional grant of power to the cities covering the contents of home-rule charters is phrased only in broad general terms, such as "municipal affairs," "concerns," or "matters." This means that the courts must determine in piecemeal manner, as cases arise, what these vague phrases mean.<sup>16</sup>

In large measure, therefore, the legal relation of the municipality to the state may be regarded as the determination of a "sphere of activity" within which each may control.<sup>17</sup> Over certain functions the state has in general retained full jurisdiction even though it may allow the local government to act as its agent in their administration. These are generally described as matters of state "concern." Included in this group are, for example, the regulation of public utilities, the establishment of courts, the method of annexation of territory to cities, and education.<sup>18</sup> The last-mentioned is of most interest by way of comparison. Without going into detail, it may be said that the public school system is one of the state's "foremost responsibilities" and is almost universally admitted to be a concern of the state.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, through a long and painful process it has

<sup>15</sup> Cities to which home rule may apply: All, in Minnesota, Oregon, Michigan, Ohio, New York, and Wisconsin; over 2,000, in Colorado and Oklahoma; over 3,500, in California and Arizona; over 5,000, in Nebraska and Texas; over 20,000, in Washington; over 100,000, in Missouri; in Maryland, Baltimore only; in Pennsylvania, no enabling act yet passed (White, *op. cit.*, p. 133). In several states a measure of home rule is conferred by statute (T. H. Reed, *Municipal Government in the United States* [rev. ed.; New York, 1934], p. 145).

<sup>16</sup> McGoldrick, *Law and Practice of Municipal Home Rule, 1916-30* (New York, 1933); New York Home Rule Commission, *Second Report* (Albany, 1925); White, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-33.

<sup>17</sup> Reed, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

<sup>18</sup> McGoldrick, *op. cit.*, pp. 329-50.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 320; see also below, pp. 112-14.

been established that a rather extensive list of functions is to be regarded as belonging in the sphere of local control, and these are designated as municipal concerns or affairs.<sup>20</sup> Naturally there is a large "no-man's land" of borderline functions concerning which no one is sure until the courts have ruled.

Our interest in this question, of course, lies in its application to the library. Where does library service fall—in the group of state concerns or in the group of local affairs? If it is a local affair, it is one concerning which the municipal charter in general may provide. Quite unlike the situation just noted in the case of public education, there is no clearly established and generally accepted legal doctrine which may be followed as a guide. The unavoidable result is a rather large number of instances in which the position of the library is uncertain. The process of working out a doctrine by a line of court decisions has not proceeded far as yet in the case of the library. Our next concern, therefore, is to point out what has been determined in this connection both as a matter of fact and as a matter of law.

*The library as a municipal concern.*—Let us consider first the evidence in favor of classifying the library as a local concern. Looking only at the actual facts of library development, one may say with few reservations that the library has grown up as a local institution, established by local initiative, designed to meet local needs, and supported and fostered by the local community. The early New England libraries, for example, were all of this character; the Massachusetts law of 1851 merely gave the cities of the state the right to establish libraries if they so desired and made no requirements whatever as to details.<sup>21</sup> This tradition of local initiative has had strong support from the early days of the public library movement down to the present time.<sup>22</sup>

Further, the same principle of local initiative has been fol-

<sup>20</sup> McGoldrick, *op. cit.*, pp. 329-50.

<sup>21</sup> Massachusetts, *Acts and Resolves*, 1851, chap. 305.

<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., Ira Divoll, "Popular Libraries," *Appleton's Journal*, IV (1870), "Educational Supplement" to No. 83 (October 29, 1870), 1-5. Discussions on library planning at the 1934 Conference of the American Library Association clearly illustrated this point.

lowed in state legislation relative to the establishment of libraries, which has almost invariably been permissive rather than mandatory in character. The states have not compelled the cities and towns to establish libraries, always leaving a greater or less degree of local discretion in the matter. In general each local unit, through its governing body or through action by its people, has made its own decision about the establishment of a public library.

It is also apparent that it has usually been assumed in the framing of home-rule charters by cities that the library actually is a municipal function concerning which the provisions of the charter will be in full effect. There is apparently no case of record in which the library provisions of a home-rule charter have been declared invalid because of conflict with a library law of the state.

The leading authorities on municipal corporations also consider the library a local affair. Elliott lists it under "measures of purely local concern";<sup>23</sup> McQuillin describes it as a municipal "function";<sup>24</sup> and Dillon apparently implies that it must be so considered.<sup>25</sup>

This view is supported to a certain extent by a number of court decisions, although the issue has seldom been contested squarely on its own merits. One of the earliest and most frequently cited cases is that of *Mount Hope Cemetery v. Boston* (1893),<sup>26</sup> in which no library question was actually at issue, but the public library was merely cited by way of example. The court asserted that in establishing the library the city was not acting "as an agent of the state government," but "with special reference to the benefit of its own inhabitants." Another well-known case is that of *Tampa v. Prince*,<sup>27</sup> in which the court very clearly declared the maintenance of the public library to be "a

<sup>23</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>24</sup> *Op. cit.*, I, 835.

<sup>25</sup> *Op. cit.*, IV, 2392; *Ruling Case Law*, XIX (1917), 766.

<sup>26</sup> 158 Mass. 509 (1893).

<sup>27</sup> 58 S. 542 (1912); 63 Fla. 387 (1912).



municipal purpose." Similarly, an Illinois case held that the Chicago Public Library "is for the exclusive benefit of the territory of Chicago" and that "the library board is but a part and parcel of the local government,"<sup>28</sup> and the Newark library board has also been designated as "a mere municipal board."<sup>29</sup>

This question was also involved in two recent and important Ohio cases arising out of the allocation of receipts from the Intangible Tax Act to public libraries and certain other agencies.<sup>30</sup> In the first of these, *Friedlander v. Gorman*,<sup>31</sup> the "distributive features" of certain sections of the intangible tax law were held to be unconstitutional because funds raised in one county might be expended in another for "purely local" purposes in which the first county was not at all interested. The decision also drew a distinction between state aid for "weak school districts," declared to be a "state purpose," and the funds raised for libraries and other agencies by the tax on intangibles. In the second case, *Cleveland v. Zangerle*,<sup>32</sup> which concerned the validity of the intangible personal-property tax law in revised form, there was no further difficulty on this point because both sides agreed that the tax was now "levied and distributed for local purposes."

*The library as a state concern.*—We now turn to the consideration of the legal evidences of the state's interest in the public library. First of all, it may be pointed out that a strong line of decisions supports the contention that the library is an educational function. The Michigan cases in this group<sup>33</sup> quote the famous clause in the Ordinance of 1787: "Religion, morality and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the *means of education* shall

<sup>28</sup> *Johnston v. Chicago*, 258 Ill. 494 (1913).

<sup>29</sup> *Free Public Library of Newark v. Civil Service Commission of New Jersey*, 83 N.J.L. 196 (1912).

<sup>30</sup> See p. 129.

<sup>31</sup> 184 N.E. 530 (1933); 126 Ohio St. 163 (1933).

<sup>32</sup> 186 N.E. 805 (1933); 127 Ohio St. 91 (1933).

<sup>33</sup> *Maynard v. Woodard*, 36 Mich. 423 (1877); *Attorney General v. Thompson*, 168 Mich. 511 (1912).

forever be encouraged,"<sup>34</sup> and base their decision that the library is an educational instrumentality in part on this provision, which is repeated in the constitution of the state. Some of the decisions merely affirm that the library is an educational function;<sup>35</sup> others describe it as an "adjunct" or supplement to the school system;<sup>36</sup> still others assert that it is part of the "educational system" of the state.<sup>37</sup> The argument here is obvious: Since education is a state concern, and the library is a part of the educational system or at least supplementary to the schools, it also is a concern of the state.

The two cases which most fully and completely sustain the contention that the library is a state concern are the Michigan case of *Attorney General v. Thompson* (supported by *Detroit v. Engel*)<sup>38</sup> and the Missouri case of *Carpenter v. St. Louis*.<sup>39</sup> Both cities involved, it should be remarked, are governed by home-rule charters. In each of these actions the question whether the public library was an affair of the city or of the state was very clearly the decisive point in determining the decision of the court. In the Detroit case the decision reads: "Taxes and bonds for school and educational purposes (the latter including libraries in the view of the court) are not for city or municipal purposes."<sup>40</sup>

The Carpenter case is of even more importance because it is comparatively recent (1928) and also because it reviews the whole field of controversy on this question up to the time it was

<sup>34</sup> "An Ordinance for the Government of the United States Northwest of the River Ohio," Art. III, in *Michigan Compiled Laws*, 1929, I, 97.

<sup>35</sup> *Crerar v. Williams*, 44 Ill. App. 497 (1892); *Essex v. Brooks*, 164 Mass. 79 (1895); *Brooks v. Schultz*, 178 Mo. 222 (1903); *Brown, Commrs. v. The State*, 34 Ohio App. 201 (1929); *Donohugh v. Free Library Company of Philadelphia*, 86 Pa. 306 (1878); *Carpenter v. St. Louis*, 2 S.W. (2d) 713 (1928).

<sup>36</sup> *Maynard v. Woodard*, 36 Mich. 423 (1877); *Free Public Library of Newark v. Civil Service Commissioners of New Jersey*, 83 N.J.L. 196 (1912).

<sup>37</sup> *School City of Marion v. Forrest*, 168 Ind. 94 (1906); *Webster City v. Wright Co.*, 144 Iowa 502 (1909); *Attorney General v. Thompson*, 168 Mich. 511 (1912).

<sup>38</sup> 207 Mich. 106 (1919).

<sup>39</sup> 2 S.W. (2d) 713 (1928); 318 Mo. 870 (1928).

<sup>40</sup> 168 Mich. 526 (1912).

decided. It is therefore worthy of special consideration. The suit arose over the failure of the city of St. Louis to levy a tax of two-fifths of a mill for library purposes, as required by a general state library law of 1885, applying to cities of over 300,000 population. This tax had been approved by a popular referendum in 1901. The attorneys for the city contended that the library was a "municipal concern" and that the library act was therefore superseded by the home-rule charter adopted in 1914. They relied heavily upon the *Mt. Hope Cemetery v. Boston* case, mentioned above.<sup>41</sup> The issue was thus clearly drawn.

In an extended statement going considerably beyond the actual needs of the immediate case, the court decided in favor of the library and ordered the city to levy the tax provided by the state library law. It held that in maintaining a library the city was merely exercising a governmental function delegated to it by the state, which, though local in its operation, was still a matter of state concern. It further laid down the dictum that "education is not limited to schools" and that "the state may concern itself with any educational enterprise," including the public library.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to the arguments contained in the court decisions discussed above, it may be pointed out that the states have, as a matter of fact, interested themselves very actively in the establishment and maintenance of public libraries. While they have not commanded cities and towns to found libraries, they have propagandized extensively and have spent much time and thought in programs of legislation for library government. For example, the amount of supervision and control over local public libraries exercised by the state of New York through its Education Department is quite comparable, in scope, method, and purpose, to the state's supervision over the educational system. Even in California, which has permitted the greatest variation in the organization of its municipal libraries under its home-rule charter system, there has been carried on simultaneously a

<sup>41</sup> *Carpenter v. St. Louis, Respondents' Statement, Brief and Argument*, pp. 52-54.

<sup>42</sup> The Carpenter case is discussed at length in McGoldrick, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-45.

most determined and successful effort to establish a state-wide system of county libraries.

*The library a concern of both state and city.*—The result of the foregoing survey is to leave the issue as it really is—confused and uncertain. Whether arguments such as those made in the Detroit and St. Louis cases could be sustained in all home-rule states may well be doubted. It so happens that in both of these cases and in the Ohio case of *Cleveland v. Zangerle* decisions were made in the interest of libraries at times of serious emergency, when contrary rulings would have been disastrous. This is particularly true of the Ohio decision, where the welfare of most of the libraries of the state was definitely at stake. In the Cincinnati bond case the court had ruled that education and libraries were not local concerns, but matters “in which every person in the state is interested”—a view almost diametrically opposed to the decisions in the other Ohio cases mentioned above.<sup>43</sup>

Most decidedly it is in point to say that there is urgent need for clarification of the library's position in many states. Even at some risk it would seem desirable to have the application of state library laws in home-rule cities tested in the courts. Whenever revision of existing laws is contemplated, the possibility of reconciliation between charters and library laws should receive most careful attention.

Apparently the natural and best answer to this question of the library's position should be a recognition of the fact that library service is a function in which both state and city are concerned. It may well be placed in a field in which control is divided between the two governmental levels rather than in one in which either is supreme. In any event the public library must be raised to a level higher than that of a purely local interest. This process will doubtless be gradual, but it must be definite if the library is to be successful either in extending its service to all the people of the state or in raising the quality of service to

<sup>43</sup> *Brown, Commrs. v. State*, 34 Ohio App. 201 (1929). For a general discussion of this whole question of divided state and local interest, consult McGoldrick, *op. cit.*, pp. 308-9.



anything like a uniform standard. This point is stated here in terms which are general and vague, but in the consideration of larger library units in chapter x, an attempt will be made to state it more concretely.

The foregoing discussion of the question of state and local interest in the library is admittedly of most immediate importance in the so-called "home-rule" states, since it is there that difficulties are most likely to arise. In a broader sense, however, it is of general interest to all states. To a large degree all problems of complete library service to the whole state and of equalization of service throughout the state depend for their solution on the manner in which this question is answered. At some time or other every state must determine whether the library is a purely local service or something more.

#### STATE SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE<sup>44</sup>

The trend toward centralization of authority in the hands of the state, like the similar trend in federal powers, is a most important characteristic of American government today. "Power is marching in the states toward the state capitals."<sup>45</sup> In view of this marked tendency we must now direct our attention briefly to the question of the relation of the public library to the state government.

*Library service not mandatory.*—Looking first at the question of state legislation with regard to the library, a subject which will receive detailed attention later in this chapter, we must again emphasize at this point the salient fact that no American state has seen fit to make state-wide library service wholly mandatory. This, of course, is the great distinction between the attitude of the state toward the school and toward the library.

Perhaps the most important single action a state might take with respect to libraries would be to make their establishment and maintenance mandatory throughout its whole territory.

<sup>44</sup> Asa Wynkoop, *Commissions, State Aid and State Agencies* (Chicago, 1923).

<sup>45</sup> White, *op. cit.*, p. 131.



The most effective argument for such action is that library service is an important educational function and as such is worthy of state-wide extension in the same manner, although not necessarily to the same degree, as the public school system. At the moment, the idea still appears somewhat visionary. In the present condition of state and local finances it is doubtful whether any state legislature would give favorable consideration to such a proposal. Even under normal conditions the possibility is still in doubt, and many librarians are uncertain that the time is yet ripe for the venture. Yet compulsory state-wide library service is definitely a proper library goal—perhaps not so far distant as it now appears.<sup>46</sup>

*Library extension agencies and their functions.*—Unwilling, or at least not yet ready, to issue a positive mandate for universal library service, the states have turned their attention toward the more limited objective of stimulating the interest of local government in the establishment and maintenance of public libraries.<sup>47</sup> In the accomplishment of this purpose the states have worked through a variety of organizations usually grouped under the generic name of “library extension agencies,” which are found today in forty-four states.<sup>48</sup> It is beyond the scope of this study to consider in detail the form of this agency; most often it is a library commission, sometimes the extension department of a state library, or in other states an activity of the state department of education.<sup>49</sup>

The functions of the commission or other state agency in connection with public libraries may be grouped in a few major sub-

<sup>46</sup> J. T. Jennings, “A Reasonable Plan of Library Service for a State,” American Library Association, *Bulletin*, XVII (1923), 284-85; H. S. Hirshberg, “The State’s Responsibility for Library Service,” *Library Journal*, XLVIII (1923), 653-59; American Library Association, Committee on Library Extension, *Library Extension: A Study of Public Library Conditions and Needs* (Chicago, 1926), pp. 87, 112.

<sup>47</sup> S. C. Wallace, *State Administrative Supervision over Cities in the United States* (New York, 1928), p. 246.

<sup>48</sup> American Library Association, *Bulletin*, XXVII (1933), H111-12. Five of these agencies have no appropriation.

<sup>49</sup> American Library Association, Library Extension Board, “Organization of State Library Extension Agencies” (1932), mimeographed.

divisions: establishment of libraries, grants-in-aid or subsidies, advice and assistance, and supervision or inspection. A fifth library activity of the state, not always connected with the state library extension agency, is the certification of the personnel of public libraries.

*Methods of state assistance to libraries.*—In the first of the directions noted above, most of the states have been extremely active and, on the whole, reasonably successful. It is largely due to the efforts of the extension agencies that the number of public libraries in the United States has reached a total of over 6,000.<sup>50</sup> Instead of condemning the state agencies for lack of zeal in this respect, it may perhaps be said that they have been too zealous in some instances. There is no doubt that many communities have been encouraged to found libraries when their financial resources were much too small to permit adequate library service on an independent basis. Furthermore, many of the state agencies, because of their strategic position, have been extremely influential in determining the governmental form of library organization in the cities and towns of their respective states. Often the commission or other agency has favored a particular type of library organization and has been largely responsible for its predominance.<sup>51</sup>

Encouragement of libraries through financial assistance from the state has as yet been extremely modest in amount. Some ten states now make direct contributions to individual public libraries, usually limited to \$100 to each library, with exceptional grants of a maximum of \$500 in Maine and Rhode Island.<sup>52</sup> A recent law of Pennsylvania has provided a considerably more liberal scale of subsidies to county libraries. This law authorizes graduated state contributions to libraries ranging from 20 per cent of the county appropriation in counties of the third class to 125 per cent in counties of the eighth class, but limited to \$2,500 annually for any one county. Unfortunately, the annual sum

<sup>50</sup> See pp. 321-22.

<sup>51</sup> See, e.g., pp. 119-20.

<sup>52</sup> Lee Wachtel, "State Provisions for the Support of Municipal Public Libraries," *Library Quarterly*, III (1933), 385.

thus far made available for this purpose is but \$20,000, and only five counties are as yet actually receiving aid under the statute.<sup>53</sup>

The rapid expansion of state aid to local governments for education and other functions naturally suggests the possibility of state grants to libraries on a scale hitherto considered impossible and visionary. If the state were to make itself financially responsible for the support of a minimum state-wide program of library service, as it has in North Carolina for education, a great step in the advancement of public libraries would be taken.<sup>54</sup> Such a program would not, and probably should not, necessarily imply state control over all libraries, for actual administration might be left in the hands of local units. A proposal of this sort may be said to represent the collectivist theory of library government. It may as well be frankly admitted that universal library service will never be achieved in many states until some such plan is put in operation.

On the other hand, it should be pointed out that state participation to the extent just mentioned is perhaps unnecessary in certain states. In the considerable group of states which have attained practical universality of library service by individual efforts of local communities, it may prove unwise to jeopardize the successful maintenance of public libraries by transferring the burden of support from the locality to the state. It is entirely possible that the result might be a leveling down rather than a building up of library service. In other words, where local effort has been reasonably successful, it should not be broken down by a collective program of the state.

Usually the funds provided by the state have been in the form of grants-in-aid, conditioned on the meeting of certain standards or requirements, rather than subsidies given as a matter of course to all libraries. This method is likely to result in a certain amount of supervision and inspection of the actual work of libraries. Some sort of annual report to the central

<sup>53</sup> *Laws of Pennsylvania*, 1931, No. 329.

<sup>54</sup> American Library Association, *Notes for a National Plan for Libraries*, June 15, 1934 (1934), p. 5.

agency from all public libraries is now required in most states. This is a first and minor step, but an important one, nevertheless, in the development of the state's interest in the library.

The most elaborate and thoroughgoing system of grants-in-aid combined with required standards of performance and systematic inspection is that of New York, carried out by the Library Extension Division of the State Education Department. This office has power to register all libraries which meet its requirements and may, under the state library law, disqualify any library which does not measure up to its standards from further receipt of public funds from any source.<sup>55</sup> While powers as sweeping as these are not likely to be invoked at all frequently, they are a powerful weapon in the hands of the state authorities.

The large numbers of small libraries, established either by stimulation of the state or through local initiative, have needed much advice and technical assistance. In most of the states this has been generously given up to the limit of available resources. Not infrequently this has meant a considerable amount of actual direction by the state of the detailed work of the library. Many small libraries throughout the country lean very heavily on the central authority for guidance and hesitate to take any important step without official sanction.

*Certification of library personnel.*—As the interest of the state in local libraries, shown by the foregoing list of activities, has developed, the desirability of taking one further step has become increasingly apparent. Unless the individual local libraries are administered by competent librarians and assistants, the value of much of the state's work in behalf of libraries may be lost. Therefore, a growing interest in the certification of qualified librarians is to be noted throughout the country. As yet only two states<sup>56</sup> have established complete systems of certification for all the professional members of library staffs. Certification of county librarians and of school librarians is much

<sup>55</sup> New York (State) Education Department, *Annual Report*, 1933, I, 293-311; *Cahill's Consolidated Laws of New York*, 1930, sec. 1117, par. 3; sec. 1130.

<sup>56</sup> New York and Wisconsin.



more commonly required.<sup>57</sup> The tangible results of certification of librarians in the states which have experimented with the system clearly indicate its great importance in the development of adequate library service. In extension of either federal or state aid to libraries, assurance of adequately trained personnel through certification laws should perhaps be required.

Beyond this point the state has not ventured in the field of library supervision and regulation. As a general rule, the hand of the state has been placed very lightly on the local library, and results have been accomplished by tactful advice and moral suasion rather than by direct order. The state has not sought actual management of local library service but has contented itself with assisting libraries, especially the smaller libraries likely to require advice and help from a central office, in the better performance of their regular work. While the program, on the whole, has been modest, the results have been of much importance.

#### CLASSIFICATION OF LAWS UNDER WHICH THE LIBRARY IS ORGANIZED

This brings us to the point where we may begin to enumerate and to discuss the different legal instruments which determine the form of library government. For this purpose there is required a general view of the whole body of laws, charters, and ordinances which may affect the establishment and organization of libraries. As far as possible the discussion here will be generalized, since details regarding particular types of libraries will receive attention in later chapters. Nor is it the purpose of this section to make recommendations as to the exact contents of the various laws and other instruments. At this point we are primarily interested in determining the extent to which each one affects the library.

*State constitutions and the library.*—Highest in rank and authority of all the sources which might determine the status of

<sup>57</sup> School librarians' certificates are required in twelve states; county librarians' in seven. American Library Association, Board of Education for Librarianship, "Certification Requirements for Librarians" (1931), mimeographed.



the library are the constitutions of the several states. But the searcher for constitutional provisions affecting the library finds only one state constitution which actually makes any such provision—that of Michigan. The successive constitutions of this state, beginning with the first (1835), have all contained a short section in the article on education requiring the legislature to provide for the establishment of at least one library in each township (and later, “city”) and providing for their support by the proceeds of the penal fines.<sup>58</sup> A few state constitutions contain provisions regarding the state library or state librarian,<sup>59</sup> and one provides that women may vote at elections for library board members,<sup>60</sup> but none except Michigan’s contains any direct provision relative to public libraries.

The educational article in the Michigan constitution begins by repeating the already quoted section from the Ordinance of 1787, relative to the encouragement of the “means of education.” The library is placed on an essential parity with the schools and is provided for in the article on education, entirely separate from the constitutional provisions relative to municipal government—a fact which makes possible a strong argument in support of the state’s interest in library service.

There is probably no real necessity for a library section or article in the state constitution. Such provisions are highly permanent and extremely difficult to change. The Michigan library section is a century old and certainly does not now represent present-day conditions either in its requirements for libraries in townships or for support by penal fines. On the other hand, if it is desired to establish the fact that the library is a state concern and that it is the intent of the state to provide for a system of public libraries, then a brief general statement in the constitution is extremely important. Probably it should go no farther

<sup>58</sup> Michigan, *Constitution*, 1908, art. xi, sec. 14. See for history: J. E. M. Vander Ploeg, “Penal Fines as Applied to the Support of Libraries in Michigan” (1929), University of Illinois Master’s thesis, M.A.L.S.

<sup>59</sup> Colorado, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, Virginia.

<sup>60</sup> Minnesota, *Constitution*, art. 7, sec. 8 (now obsolete).

than a declaration of purpose without detailed provisions as to the exact form of library organization.

Of course, certain provisions of a general nature in state constitutions may concern the library very positively. Among the most important of these are the increasing number of amendments limiting taxation, which have very materially affected libraries in several states. Prohibitions against special legislation often prevent further organization of libraries by special statutes. A provision of this sort resulted in a court decision declaring the law governing the Cincinnati Public Library to be special legislation and therefore unconstitutional.<sup>61</sup> And, as we have already seen, general provisions in the constitution concerning municipal home rule and the framework of municipal government may also ultimately affect the government of the library.

The next rung downward in the ladder of the legal authority is that of state legislation. The governmental form of the majority of public libraries is determined by some sort of state law, although this is by no means always a general "library law." State laws governing libraries are of four types: (1) special laws concerning particular libraries, (2) special laws concerning particular cities, (3) general laws relating to municipalities, and (4) general library laws. These will be considered in the order named.

*Libraries established under special laws.*—Although prohibitions against special legislation are now common in American states, there is still a considerable number of libraries whose organization is determined by special laws applying to a single library. About half of these in the group of cities of over 30,000 population are of the corporation and association type; the others are municipal libraries.<sup>62</sup> The three great public libraries in New York City all fall in this class, as do the libraries of Boston, Detroit, Buffalo, and many smaller places. Most of the libraries in this group date back to the period when

<sup>61</sup> *Brown, Commrs. v. State*, 34 Ohio App. 201 (1929).

<sup>62</sup> Total in which special laws are a factor: 41.

special legislation was still common. Rather often important benefactions have made it necessary or at least desirable to organize the libraries under special laws to meet particular conditions. At the present time, however, this method of establishing libraries is little used.

Another type of special law which may determine the organization of the library is the statute providing in detail for the general government of a particular city. A law of this kind may contain sections regarding the public library. Such laws, of course, are actually city charters, although not of the home-rule variety, framed by the cities themselves. The public library of New Haven, Connecticut, is a good example of this type.<sup>63</sup>

*General state laws regarding municipalities.*—Any general law of the state relating to the government of cities or other local units, or to tax systems and budget procedure, or to public personnel, may have some bearing on the status of the library. So numerous are the possibilities that it is quite impossible to make a complete list. The examples given below include a number of types of laws which in practice have had an important bearing on the administration of libraries.

The most inclusive of such statutes is the group which provides for the organization of local government of all kinds. Included here are general municipal codes, statutes applying to particular forms of municipal government, such as the commission or manager plans, and optional charter forms among which cities may choose. Laws of this sort provide in considerable detail for the form of municipal government and for the conduct of city affairs; they may refer specifically to the library or may affect it through clauses of general application to all departments. Such, for example, are the commission government laws of Illinois<sup>64</sup> and Iowa.<sup>65</sup> The library provisions of these laws have now been brought into agreement with the state library laws. The New Jersey commission government law, although it

<sup>63</sup> New Haven, *Charter and Ordinances*, 1928, secs. 177-82.

<sup>64</sup> Cahill's *Illinois Revised Statutes*, 1933, chap. 24, art. xiii, esp. sec. 346.

<sup>65</sup> *Code of Iowa*, 1931, secs. 6572-73.

does not directly mention libraries, completely controls the government of a group of libraries in that state.<sup>66</sup> Wisconsin laws for commission and manager government both provide that cities may, if they desire, abolish administrative boards or change their membership.<sup>67</sup> Laws of this kind, of course, may easily result in complete alteration of the form of library organization.

A large group of state laws regarding budgetary and financial procedure and the auditing of municipal accounts also has a direct bearing on the financial administration of libraries. Examples of this sort which have specifically affected libraries are found in Ohio,<sup>68</sup> Indiana,<sup>69</sup> Massachusetts,<sup>70</sup> and Washington.<sup>71</sup> Laws of this kind do not change the actual structure of the library, but may impose important specific limitations on the control of funds by library boards and on methods of financial administration.

Again, state civil service laws may also be made to include public library staffs in cities which elect to follow their provisions. This has been the case in a number of Illinois cities, including Chicago,<sup>72</sup> and also in New Jersey.<sup>73</sup> In Massachusetts the state civil service law requires that all janitors and other persons employed in the care of public buildings shall be appointed under state civil service rules, and this regulation applies to all town or city public libraries in the state.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>66</sup> New Jersey, *Cumulative Supplement to Compiled Statutes, 1911-1924*, sec. \*\*136, II, 2456-511; see pp. 156-57.

<sup>67</sup> Wisconsin, *Statutes*, 1931, secs. 63.12, 64.10.

<sup>68</sup> *Throckmorton's 1930 Annotated Code of Ohio*, secs. 274-91.

<sup>69</sup> *Burns' Annotated Indiana Statutes*, 1926, sec. 14239.

<sup>70</sup> Massachusetts, *General Laws*, 1932, chap. 44.

<sup>71</sup> *Remington's Revised Statutes of Washington*, 1931, secs. 9000-1 to 9000-24.

<sup>72</sup> *Cahill's Illinois Revised Statutes*, 1933, chap. 24, secs. 685-725.

<sup>73</sup> New Jersey, *Cumulative Supplement to the Compiled Statutes, 1911-24*, secs. 144-57 to 144-130, II, 2576-99.

<sup>74</sup> Massachusetts Department of Civil Service and Registration, *Civil Service Law and Rules* (1932), p. 17.



*General state library laws.*—The use of the term “state library laws” narrows the field of consideration down to those general laws of the state which cover the organization and administration of public libraries. Usually these laws constitute separate “chapters” or portions of the state statutes, but in some cases they may merely be parts of municipal or educational codes. Wherever found, they are ordinarily referred to as the library law of the state, and it is on this group of laws that the attention of trustees and librarians has almost wholly been concentrated. Every one of the states now has on its statute-books some sort of general law authorizing the establishment and maintenance of public libraries.

Because of their wide application and importance, it is probably fair to say that these laws as a whole are more carefully considered and planned than the library provisions in individual city charters or ordinances. Usually they have been drafted under the direction of legislative committees of state library associations, and they have been tested by use and amended when necessary. In other words, they represent the best library opinion relative to the government of libraries, at least as far as it has been possible to translate that opinion into legal form.

Usually the library laws of the states provide for several different types of libraries in addition to those managed under municipal authority. Quite commonly, special provisions for libraries in villages, towns, and townships are found in addition to the laws governing city libraries. Because of the historic importance of corporation and association libraries, laws referring to this type are often retained on the statute-books. Similarly, there are laws regarding school-district libraries, even in states where this type of library is in practice unimportant, and county libraries are also provided for in the laws of many states. In other words, the general effect of the library law is that of a number of optional plans from which the different communities may select in organizing their libraries.

The state laws relating to libraries fall naturally into three main groups. In the first, containing more than two-thirds of



the states, the library laws are detailed and complete, particularly with reference to the powers and duties of the governing board of the library. Undoubtedly the leading example of this type of "long law," as it is frequently called,<sup>75</sup> is Illinois. The law of this state has been quite frankly copied in large measure by several other states, and many of its sections have been included in part in still other laws. A second group of nine states has library laws which contain a certain amount of detail but are not specific about the powers of the library board.<sup>76</sup> The law of Massachusetts illustrates this type. The third group is composed of seven states in which the laws contain no details whatever.<sup>77</sup> Usually these are not properly "library" laws at all, but merely parts of municipal codes empowering cities to establish libraries among other municipal functions. Typical of this group is Texas, in which state the law merely permits cities to establish libraries and leaves details entirely to the local authorities.

*Application of state library laws.*—After saying all this about general state library laws, the question now naturally arises: To what extent do these general laws actually apply in detail to individual public libraries? With respect to certain groups of libraries there is little doubt. Libraries organized as school-district libraries and thus attached to the system of public education are of course administered under the state laws concerning libraries of this sort, since educational matters in general are governed by state laws. State laws also apply very generally in the case of libraries which are part of the county government, since most counties are also governed by general laws and there is as yet relatively little county home rule. On the other hand, it is equally obvious that libraries organized under special laws or under special charters of incorporation are not controlled by general library laws.

<sup>75</sup> W. F. Yust, *Library Legislation*, (2d ed. rev.; Chicago, 1921), p. 7.

<sup>76</sup> Georgia, Massachusetts, Montana, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Pennsylvania (long law but powers of board not detailed).

<sup>77</sup> Alabama, Maine, Mississippi, New Mexico, Texas, Virginia, Wyoming (some of these have detailed county library laws).

But at this point generalization ceases to be easy. Particularly in the case of municipal libraries—libraries which are definitely part of the city government—there are many possible variations in the application of state laws and in the actual legal status of the library. In connection with this large group of libraries the synopsis in Table I will be helpful in determining when and to what extent the general laws apply.

Study of this table in connection with what has already been said about the question of home rule earlier in the chapter will nearly always afford a clue as to the library situation in a particular city. Naturally, it is not a matter of mathematical certainty, but logical deductions can usually be made, and a number of typical situations may be readily identified. Some of the most important of these will next be considered.

In Group I are found most of the libraries in the home-rule cities. In these the general rule is that the city-charter provisions prevail over general state library laws. Paradoxical as this may appear at first, it is sound legal reasoning. The state through its constitution has granted the city the right to frame a charter for the government of its municipal affairs, and in this field the city is supreme. Even though home-rule enabling acts may provide that municipal charters shall be subject to general state laws, this has usually been construed to mean that the charter is subject only to general laws regarding state concerns and not to general laws regarding municipal concerns.<sup>78</sup> In general, the foregoing rule applies to the libraries in cities governed by home-rule charters. Here one ordinarily looks first to the charter as the legal foundation on which the library stands, and only secondarily to the state law. In some instances there is question as to whether the state law or the charter prevails, but usually the charter is followed when there is specific conflict. If the library can be shown to be a state concern, then of course the situation is quite different.

A few examples will illustrate the point. In California, which has gone farther in home rule than any American state, the ex-

<sup>78</sup> McGoldrick, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

cellent state law concerning municipal libraries has no application to home-rule cities unless the city chooses to follow the law

TABLE I\*

GENERAL STATE LIBRARY LAWS: APPLICATION  
TO MUNICIPAL LIBRARIES

| Type of Library Law   | Application in Cities Governed by Home-Rule Charters                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Application in Cities not Governed by Home-Rule Charters                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Detailed.....         | I. <i>City-charter</i> provisions regarding libraries usually prevail over library laws in states where home-rule powers of cities are extensive and also in other states where home rule is less strong. Position of library often uncertain and conflicts frequent. Library laws apply when not in conflict with municipal charters.† | IV. Provisions of <i>library law</i> ordinarily apply fully. Status of libraries may be affected to greater or less extent by other general laws of the state.                                                      |
| Somewhat detailed.... | II. Practically same as above.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | V. State <i>library law</i> applies as far as its details provide. Considerable freedom of municipal action through <i>ordinances</i> , subject to general and optional state laws concerning municipal government. |
| Not detailed.....     | III. <i>Charters and ordinances</i> entirely determine form of library organization.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | VI. Municipal freedom of action through <i>ordinance</i> is complete, except as controlled by general state laws relative to municipal government.                                                                  |

\* This table does not apply to libraries organized under special laws, to school-district libraries, or to county libraries.

† A number of libraries in Michigan cities fall in this group in spite of the decision in *Attorney General v. Thompson* cited above (p. 45). St. Louis (see discussion of *Carpenter v. St. Louis*, pp. 45-46) does not fall in this group; the city charter does not provide for the organization of the library.

in its charter. It is therefore scarcely too much to say that the library law stands on the statute-books merely as a suggestion

to the cities. They may follow it or not as they wish. In this state all of the larger cities and many smaller ones have adopted home-rule charters, since all cities of over thirty-five hundred population are permitted to frame their own charters. In Michigan the practice is exactly the same, but not as many cities are affected because many libraries are administered by school districts rather than by cities. Other examples of home-rule charters which determine library organization wholly or partially may be found in Arizona, Colorado, Minnesota, New York, Oklahoma, and in Washington.<sup>79</sup>

The conditions noted in Group II in the table do not actually apply to any cities at the present time. Group III applies solely to Texas, which is the only home-rule state in which the library law is not detailed. The general rule, therefore, necessarily is that every chartered city in Texas is free to organize its library as it pleases, through charter provisions or ordinances. As in California, all of the principal cities of the state and many smaller ones are in the home-rule group, and therefore many libraries are affected.

In those states in which home-rule charters for cities are not found, the situation is entirely different. Here the legislatures may pass general laws on any subject, whether it be a state or a municipal concern, and such laws will usually have general application except in cases where special laws are still in effect. It is therefore in Group IV that we find the important systems of public libraries, all governed in a uniform manner under the terms of a detailed library law. Indeed, it is only in this group that anything approaching complete uniformity in library organization is likely to be found. The most important groups of libraries of this sort are found in Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Indiana, and New Jersey.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>79</sup> There is some doubt as to the relative authority of state laws and municipal charters in Washington.

<sup>80</sup> Other important "systems"—not municipal—are the county libraries of California and the school-district libraries of Ohio. Although Wisconsin is a home-rule state, it is included in this group because its libraries have not as yet been greatly affected by changes in municipal organization owing to home rule.

But it must not be forgotten that the general library law of a state is only one law among many other general laws. At any moment, a later act of state-wide application may be passed which will be in effect an amendment of the library act. Even laws establishing minimum tax rates for libraries may be amended in this manner. Recently emergency legislation in Indiana and New Jersey has had this effect.<sup>81</sup>

In Group VI a still different situation is to be observed. Since the library laws contain no details concerning the government of the library, the municipality may by ordinance organize its library in any desired manner. It is not limited by any state library law and need observe only such general laws relating to municipalities as may apply. The situation in general is quite the same as in the home-rule cities, with one important exception. If the state sees fit, it may pass a detailed library law applying to all libraries, in which case the city would be obliged to conform to the new law in the management of its library.

The cities in Group V are in part in the same position. They must observe the provisions of the state library law as far as these exist in detail, but in other respects they may follow their own wishes. The result is a considerable amount of local autonomy in library affairs.

In view of the foregoing statement it is perhaps not surprising to find that in about half of the 310 cities in the 30,000-population class the library is not governed by detailed provisions of general library laws. This means that the fundamental legal basis in the case of these libraries is found in special laws, charters, ordinances, general articles of incorporation, and general laws governing cities. The proportion of exceptions to the general law in smaller cities and towns is undoubtedly considerably less, but is still large enough to be important.

*Suggestions as to the content of library laws.*—Before leaving this subject of state library laws, two specific suggestions regarding their contents may be made. In the first place, the existing

<sup>81</sup> *Laws of the State of Indiana*, 1931, chap. 145; *Acts of the State of New Jersey*, 1933, chap. 16.



laws as a group are almost wholly lacking in any general statement of the purpose and objectives of the state in providing for the establishment of public libraries. Such a statement might be briefly embodied in a preamble or introductory section. If sufficiently broad in its provisions, this section would do much to establish the fact that the library is a concern of the state. More or less as a corollary to the foregoing, the application of the law to all public libraries, particularly to those in home-rule cities, should be clearly defined whenever possible. Provisions of this sort would have an important bearing on the legal position of the library.<sup>82</sup>

In the second place, it is quite clear that the vital portion of the law, so far as the administrative control of the library is concerned, is the statement of the powers and duties of the library board. Trustees and librarians will have frequent occasion to consult this section of the law. It is therefore highly advisable that the clauses referring to this subject should be grouped together in one place and that the actual powers of the board be clearly stated in itemized form.<sup>83</sup>

The relative degree of authority of the state and the city over the library has been discussed in general terms in the preceding section. There still remains to be considered somewhat more in detail the place of the library in the city government, as determined by city charters and ordinances.

*City charters and the library.*—In beginning the consideration of library status under city charters, it is necessary first of all to make clear exactly what is meant by the word "charter."

<sup>82</sup> A tentative draft (1934) of a revised library law for the state of Washington contains the following provisions of interest in this connection: "SECTION 1. It is hereby declared to be the policy of the state, as a part of its provision for public education, to promote the establishment and development of public library service throughout its various sub-divisions. . . . SEC. 19. Every existing free public library shall be considered as if established under this act. . . . The provisions of this act shall be construed as superseding the provisions of any municipal charter in conflict herewith." (Law passed in 1935 in form quoted.)

<sup>83</sup> The California municipal library law is an excellent example of the precise and orderly statement of the powers of the library board (*General Laws of California*, 1931 [Deering], Act 2751, sec. 11).

Broadly speaking, the charter of a city comprises not only the specific written instrument of incorporation but also all the general and special laws of the state which affect the city government in any way, as well as the decisions of the courts concerning the city. More narrowly, the charter is the particular legal instrument which determines the powers of the municipality and prescribes in detail its form of government. It is to the city what the constitution is to the state. Such charters may be home-rule charters, framed and adopted by the city itself; or they may be special acts of the legislature applying to the government of a particular city; or the city may be incorporated under general laws or may choose among several optional forms of government established by the state.<sup>84</sup> We are here primarily concerned with the first two classes, the home-rule and the special-law charters, since it is these which affect libraries most definitely. Of the two groups, the home-rule charters are much more numerous and important in their relation to libraries.

Library provisions of several different types are found in city charters. As a matter of fact, it is not actually necessary for the charter to say anything at all about the library other than to enumerate library service as a function which the city may perform. This is the method suggested in the model city charter approved by the National Municipal League. This charter makes no provision whatever for the organization of the library but stipulates that all departments of the city government shall be established by ordinance.<sup>85</sup> This of course is in line with the general desire to make the municipal structure highly flexible and to give the city council complete power in its control of all details of local government. An actual example of this sort is found in the city charter of Pontiac, Michigan. This charter does not even mention the library as one of the city functions, but the city has taken over the operation of the library under

<sup>84</sup> McQuillin, *op. cit.*, I, 824-900; W. B. Munro, *Government of American Cities* (4th ed.; New York, 1926), p. 92; McGoldrick, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

<sup>85</sup> National Municipal League, Committee on Municipal Program, *A Model City Charter* (rev. ed.; New York, 1933), pp. 8, 43.

its general powers<sup>86</sup> and administers it entirely without reference to the state library law. In several other cities the charter does not provide in detail for the organization of the library, thus leaving the whole matter to be determined by ordinance.<sup>87</sup>

Much more commonly, however, the charter makes definite provisions, even though brief, for the control and management of the library. Usually this is done by a special article or section devoted to the library. In certain cases this charter provision may be a mere reference to the state library law. Rather than attempt to specify in detail what the organization of the library is to be, some charter drafters have used the simple but ingenious device of merely inserting in the charter a clause stating that the provisions of the state library law shall be in effect with respect to the library. For example, the charter of Santa Rosa, California, states that "the free public library of the city shall be managed under and in accordance with the provisions of the general laws of the state relating to free public libraries."<sup>88</sup> Several other California city charters contain more or less similar sections.<sup>89</sup> This method naturally meets the approval of those who believe that the state library laws are the best examples of library organization.<sup>90</sup> Apparently the plan has worked satisfactorily in the cities mentioned, and questions of conflict between other sections of the charter and the provisions of the state library law have not arisen.

The same result may be achieved by repeating *in extenso* in the charter the provisions of the state library law. San Bernardino, California, seems to be the only city which has done this at all completely, and even there the state law is not followed in all details.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Pontiac, *Charter*, 1920, p. 4.

<sup>87</sup> Beaumont, Houston, Pueblo, Tulsa.

<sup>88</sup> Santa Rosa, *Charter*, 1922, sec. 26.

<sup>89</sup> Tulare, *Charter*, 1923, sec. 59; Alhambra, *Charter*, 1927, sec. 99; Redwood City, *Proposed Charter*, 1929, sec. 18.

<sup>90</sup> Indorsed by American Library Association Committee on Charter Provisions, American Library Association, *Bulletin*, VII (1913), 376-77.

<sup>91</sup> *Charter*, 1905, art. xii, in *California Statutes*, 1905: "Concurrent and Joint Resolutions," chap. xv.

The same device may also be used in the case of special acts relating to libraries. Grand Rapids has incorporated bodily into the municipal charter a local law under which the library was organized, thus preserving the old form under a new home-rule charter;<sup>92</sup> and the charter of Bay City makes effective provisions of a local law relating to the library.<sup>93</sup>

In other instances, a partial connection with the state library law may be made by providing that the library board shall have the powers enumerated in the state library law except as otherwise specified in the charter. This is done in the charters of Seattle and Oakland.<sup>94</sup>

However, it is much more common practice in the framing of charters to include specially drafted provisions for the organization and administration of the library rather than to rely on mere copying of old forms. The very reason for drafting the new charter is that the existing forms do not suit changed conditions. The charter itself is conceived as a whole, and the portions relating to each individual function are more or less carefully fitted into the complete picture.

At this point we are not concerned with a classification of the actual provisions of city charters with reference to public libraries, since the results of these provisions in the form of different types of library organization will receive attention in succeeding chapters. It is sufficiently evident from what has already been said that there is no single pattern for library sections in city charters. Each charter and each library article is an individual case. Some charters are long and detailed; others are purposely brief and leave much to be determined by "administrative codes" and other ordinances. The library article is likely to vary correspondingly. In the charter of Berkeley, California, for example, only two or three scattered sentences refer to the

<sup>92</sup> Grand Rapids, *Charter*, 1932, title xiii; Michigan, *Local Acts*, 1903, No. 401, pp. 291-93.

<sup>93</sup> Bay City, *Charter*, 1921, art. xxv, sec. 5; Michigan, *Local Acts*, 1903, No. 514.

<sup>94</sup> Seattle, *Charter*, 1928, art. xiv, sec. 5; Oakland, *Charter*, 1930, art. x, sec. 54, par. i.



library; in Los Angeles the sections concerning the library comprise several pages.<sup>95</sup>

The problems involved in any attempt to frame a uniform library article for city charters generally are clearly obvious in view of what has been said. It is difficult to draft provisions for a part before the plan of the whole is known. Any uniform library article which might be drafted would undoubtedly introduce distinct exceptions to the general plan of many charters.

Similarly, it must be remembered that the library article of a charter cannot stand alone. It is not the only portion of the charter which has, or may have, a bearing on the administration of the library. Among the general and detailed provisions found in other parts of the document are likely to be many which may be of much importance in determining the position of the library with respect to the remainder of the city government. This point may best be made clear by a concrete illustration. The long and carefully detailed library article<sup>96</sup> in the Oakland, California, charter provides that the library shall be "under the exclusive control and management" of the library board. Yet other sections of the charter show that this "exclusive management" must be exercised in accordance with certain very positive rules of procedure. Some of the more important of these general provisions affecting the library are:

The power to acquire and lease property, to construct library buildings, and to receive gifts is vested in the Council.

Appointments to the staff are subject to civil service rules determined by the Civil Service Board.

The Manager has no administrative power over the library, but he submits the annual budget for all departments to the Council.

The method of submitting budget estimates is specified in detail.

The Council passes an annual appropriation ordinance and expenditures must be in accordance with that ordinance.

All payments are subject to scrutiny by the Auditor, the financial procedure is specified in detail, and a uniform accounting system is provided.

Numerous details regarding the granting of contracts and the purchase of supplies are binding on all departments, including the library.

<sup>95</sup> Berkeley, *Charter*, 1923; Los Angeles, *Charter*, 1929, secs. 157-62, also secs. 71-73.

<sup>96</sup> Oakland, *Charter*, 1930, art. x, pp. 58-61. Special index to library provisions of charter prepared by John B. Kaiser, librarian, Oakland Free Library.



It is in connection with such general provisions as the foregoing that much confusion as to the exact position of the library is likely to result. If it is desired to make the library conform in every detail to the general administrative plan of the city, well and good. If, on the other hand, it is the intention to give the library board broad powers, then care must be taken to insure that the statement of such powers is not too greatly limited by other general provisions of the charter. In many cities it seems quite obvious that such matters have not been carefully considered in the drafting of charters; in one or two instances the library has quite clearly been forgotten. On the whole, there is much need for greater care in the drafting of library provisions in city charters.

The charters of the home-rule cities are the spearpoint of the attack on the old established forms of city and library government alike. The most numerous and most radical changes yet made in the standardized patterns of library management have taken place in the cities governed by these charters. As yet this is only a trend, often resulting in compromise between old and new forms rather than in complete alteration of the library organization. The extent to which the movement has already progressed may be shown by the general statement that in the group of home-rule cities with libraries under municipal authority the position of about two-thirds of the libraries has undergone important modification.<sup>97</sup>

*City ordinances and the library.*—We have now examined the position of the public library under state constitutions, state laws, and city charters and have left for further consideration only the question of the effect of municipal ordinances on library organization. In non-technical terms ordinances may be defined as local laws of the cities corresponding at the municipal level to the laws of the state or nation. Usually the ordinance is a formal enactment of the governing body of the city, passing through several “readings” before final approval and sometimes

<sup>97</sup> Statement applies to cities of over 30,000 population with municipal libraries. It does not apply to school-district or corporation or county libraries.

subject to veto by the mayor.<sup>98</sup> As a rule, the rôle of the ordinance in determining the structure of government is a supplementary one. It is used to complete or supplement the provisions of state laws or municipal charters with respect to the administration of local government.<sup>99</sup>

To this general rule the library is no exception. Ordinances concerning libraries are used to fill in gaps in the governmental structure or to give local or specific application to the provisions of laws and charters. In all such cases they occupy a position of subordinate or secondary importance. Although there are of course a great many examples, it is possible to classify most of the library ordinances in a few principal groupings which will require only brief characterization.

In the first place, the ordinance is commonly used as an official pronouncement of the establishment of the library under the terms of the state library law or the city charter. Not infrequently the state law is more or less completely repeated in the ordinance. Closely related to this type is the ordinance accepting and agreeing to the terms of a gift for a building by Andrew Carnegie or some local donor. In the case of the so-called "Carnegie libraries" such ordinances contain the pledge required by Mr. Carnegie that the city must annually expend for the operation of the library an amount equal to 10 per cent of his donation.

Another common provision of municipal ordinances is the enumeration of specific penalties for damage or loss of books or for the non-return of books under the rules of the library. Such ordinances, again, supplement the usual state laws on the same subject.

A variety of ordinances is required to put the city's fiscal machinery in motion for the library. When there is a special library tax, the council must usually determine or at least enumerate it in the ordinance making the municipal tax levy. When there is no special tax, the appropriation for the library will be

<sup>98</sup> McQuillin, *op. cit.*, II, 518-32; Reed, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-67.

<sup>99</sup> Munro, *Government of American Cities* (4th ed.; New York, 1926), pp. 115, 295.

included in greater or less detail in the general appropriation ordinance passed by the council.

More important from the governmental point of view are those ordinances which provide the details of library organization lacking in legal instruments of higher rank. When the state law or the city charter is not specific in such matters, the ordinance must carry on from the point where their provisions cease. Under such circumstances the legal form of the library is based on the combined provisions of the charter and the ordinance or of the state law and the ordinance. Neither is complete without the other.

In certain cases, indeed, the importance of the ordinance is raised to the point where it becomes the organic law of the library. It is then the only instrument which provides for the organization of the library and is, therefore, of final force. This situation, of course, is most likely to be found in states where the library law contains nothing about the form of library management. Altogether there are over twenty cities in the 30,000-population group in which the libraries are entirely dependent on ordinances for their form. Most of the examples are found in southern cities, including such places as New Orleans, Houston, Birmingham, and Richmond. In the four Pennsylvania cities of Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Reading, and Scranton, also, the library ordinances, while dependent upon a clause in the state law, provide all essential details relative to the composition and powers of the library boards and the organization of the libraries in general.

The position of a library organized wholly under an ordinance, it is important to observe, is relatively very insecure as compared with one established under a state law or charter provision. Legally, the library is at the mercy of the city council. At any time, the council, if it so desires, may repeal the existing ordinance and pass a new one entirely different in form. This is no mere theoretical possibility, for it actually occurred in New Orleans in 1932. The Commission-Council rescinded the long-standing ordinance governing the library, abolished the library

board, and passed a new ordinance creating another board with terms of office effective immediately.<sup>100</sup> Similar action could be taken in most cities where the library is governed under the terms of an ordinance.

For the sake of completeness it should be added that city councils may sometimes take action affecting the library by means of "resolutions."<sup>101</sup> These are less formal than ordinances and more easily adopted and rescinded. They are ordinarily used for administrative purposes, such as the fixing of staff salaries or for other decisions relative to the staff.

*Special library charters.*—In some states it has been quite common to grant charters of incorporation to individual libraries under which they are established and managed. Charters of this sort must not be confused with the library provisions of city charters or with special state laws relating to libraries; they are similar to the charters incorporating educational or charitable institutions. Some charters of this sort are actually the organic law of the library, specifying in detail the composition and powers of the board. Others do this only in part and are subject to the general provisions of the state library law.

An interesting group of examples of this kind are the libraries chartered by the Regents of the University of the State of New York prior to 1921. Such charters, unless amended, have the force of law and may determine the composition and tenure of office of the library board. Formerly this method was extensively used, and many charters are still in effect throughout the state.<sup>102</sup> This plan allowed much variation in the appointment and composition of library boards, and enabled the Education Department to adapt such provisions to local conditions in the most satisfactory manner.

<sup>100</sup> Ordinance No. 13620, "Commission-Council Series," February 25, 1932 (Calendar No. 14217).

<sup>101</sup> McQuillin, *op. cit.*, II, 532-37; Reed, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

<sup>102</sup> University of the State of New York, *Educational Corporations of New York State*, compiled by Sara L. Gardiner, (Albany, 1924). Libraries with old Regents' charters include Amsterdam, Binghamton, Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, Niagara Falls, Schenectady, Syracuse, Utica, White Plains, Yonkers.

Even more important are the cases of libraries organized under general laws authorizing the issuance of charters to institutions of learning and libraries. These charters set forth in detail the organization of the library and the powers of its board, and the general effect is precisely the same as that of a special statute. All of the libraries organized in this manner belong to the corporation and association group described in the next chapter, and numerous examples are found in the South and in Pennsylvania.

## SUMMARY

The principal purpose of this chapter has been to show the highly varied legal structure on which the public libraries of the

TABLE II

LEGAL BASIS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN CITIES OF OVER 30,000 POPULATION

| BASIS OF ORGANIZATION                    | NUMBER OF LIBRARIES |               |       |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|-------|
|                                          | Sole Basis          | Partial Basis | Total |
| General state library law.....           | 109                 | 39            | 148   |
| Special library law.....                 | 31                  | 10            | 41    |
| School code or other state law.....      | 24                  | 0             | 24    |
| City charter—home-rule or special-law... | 39                  | 32            | 71    |
| City ordinance.....                      | 21                  | 32            | 53    |
| Special library charter.....             | 12                  | 16            | 28    |
| Combination of several methods.....      | 61                  | .....         | ..... |
| Not identified.....                      | 18                  | .....         | ..... |
| Total libraries.....                     | 315                 | .....         | ..... |

United States are founded. Statistically this is shown for libraries in cities of over 30,000 population in Table II. This tabulation should be read in the following manner. In the first column, "Basis of Organization," are given the different kinds of laws, charters, etc., under which the library may be organized and governed. The number of libraries falling in each group is shown in the succeeding columns of the table. In the column headed "Sole Basis" is shown the number of libraries in which a general state library law or other instrument provides all the essential



details regarding the method of library organization and management. In the column headed "Partial Basis" is shown the number of additional libraries whose organization is partially, but not wholly, dependent on a particular type of law or charter.

With a foundation as varied in nature as that shown in Table II, anything remotely approaching uniformity in library government in a detailed sense is manifestly impossible. Uniformity has been broken down by a considerable amount of special legislation, by the home-rule charter movement, by the lack of detail in a number of state library laws, and, lastly, by the offering of optional forms of organization in the more detailed state laws. There is, therefore, in the United States no one system or pattern of library government—not even forty-eight systems—but instead an almost infinite variety of possible forms. Very seldom, indeed, is it safe to predict the exact form of government of a public library without first making a check of the local situation. In a number of states one may be fairly certain of the facts, but in others complete uncertainty is the safest rule.

The complex nature of the American system of library legislation may perhaps be better understood if it is contrasted with the relative simplicity of the English system. In England the national government is virtually in the same position with respect to local public libraries as an American state. Parliament may by general laws provide for the methods of organization and control of all libraries and has actually done so by a relatively simple series of acts for England and Wales, and by similar series for Scotland and Ireland. Instead of forty-eight systems of law, as in the United States, one suffices for England and Wales and three for Great Britain.<sup>103</sup>

There is perhaps no special merit in uniformity as such. Experimentation in the form of local government is an American tradition, and there is no reason why the library should be an exception to the general rule. On the other hand, there is little merit in diversity unless it is carefully considered. If the variation is caused, as it is in many cases, merely by chance or even

<sup>103</sup> C. R. Sanderson, *Library Law* (London, 1925).

by neglect, then there can be nothing highly significant in it. As between a carefully worked-out plan such as that found in many state library laws and a local provision which may or may not have been deliberately and thoughtfully planned, the presumption is certainly in favor of the uniform scheme.

The possibilities of uniform library legislation among the different states have not received a great deal of attention. To be sure, the amount of copying from state to state, of which the spread of the Illinois law is the most notable example, has been considerable and has given a certain degree of uniformity. However, it may be suggested that American library practice and experience have gone far enough to permit the consideration of the possibility of more or less identical state library laws in many states. While several of the states have developed special types of laws which have been successful and which they would undoubtedly prefer to maintain, in a large number of states there are no marked variants which seem to require special consideration.

Moreover, in many states the general legal position of cities and libraries with reference to the state appears to be sufficiently alike to make it safe to assume that a uniform library law would have practically the same status in all. This would be true, for example, in the large group of states in which municipal home rule is not a factor. For this whole group of states uniform laws, subject to necessary adjustments in each state, might be considered. Perhaps the most sensible plan in this connection would be a more restricted attempt to frame a uniform library statute suitable for a particular region in which governmental facts and traditions are generally similar. Opportunities for such legislation appear especially favorable in New England and the South.

Throughout all the ramifications of library governmental relations it is clear that the desire for independence commented on in the preceding chapter has manifested itself in many ways. The struggle for independent administration has been carried on at every level in the legal structure on which the library rests. If

the state law did not provide the desired autonomy, then the city charter might; or failing the charter, a degree of independence might still be obtained by ordinance. At least the library world has been consistent in this respect.

The hope of the librarian that the whole answer to all the legal problems of the library may be found by reference to a small pamphlet containing the library laws of his state is vain. Library law is not a thing apart; it cannot be considered by itself in a vacuum. At many points, some obvious and some unexpected, it is intimately related to other bodies of law. The student of library government, therefore, should be fully as much concerned with the organization of state and local government in general as he is with library law in particular.

The necessarily complex and difficult nature of the facts presented in this chapter suggests forcefully the importance of clarification and definition of library status—a subject to which frequent reference will be made in the following chapters. At the present time much confusion exists, and the need for clear thinking and definite action is apparent at many points. In this connection it is in point to repeat the recommendation made earlier in the chapter that state library laws include a preamble briefly stating the objectives of the state in providing for a system of public libraries and making clear the state's concern in library service.<sup>104</sup> To this may be added the further recommendation that as much uniformity as possible in the form of library organization be secured through carefully considered legislation of general application to all libraries.

<sup>104</sup> See p. 64.

### CHAPTER III

#### PUBLIC LIBRARIES CONTROLLED BY CORPORATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS<sup>1</sup>

THE gap between the free public library of today and its predecessors is most easily bridged by the consideration of a group of libraries whose corporate organization remains essentially a thing of the past, while its actual functions and services are wholly modern. The dead hand of the past has extended itself over the present and has fixed the legal form and control of these institutions in a mold satisfactory to their founders but often so rigid that modifications and changes required by conditions of the present are difficult, if not impossible. Whether this close relation to the past is indeed a serious handicap or whether, on the contrary, it serves to preserve a tradition and spirit of actual significance in the world of today is a debatable point. It is to be hoped that the discussion in this chapter will throw some light on this question.

##### DEFINITION

Formulation of a brief and accurate definition covering the libraries comprising the group to be considered in this chapter is almost impossible because of the large amount of individual variation among the institutions included. The terms "corporation" library and "association" library convey a fairly exact meaning to the librarian, but are almost always used without precise definition in official compilations.<sup>2</sup> The most essential distinction between these libraries and public libraries of other kinds lies in the fact that control and sometimes ownership are

<sup>1</sup> When authority is not otherwise cited, information was obtained from questionnaires or personal visits to libraries.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Office of Education, *Statistics of Public, Society and School Libraries, 1929* (Bulletin No. 37 [1930]), is an example.

wholly or in part vested in a corporation, association, or similar organization which in itself is not a part of the municipal or other government. Frequently, though not always, there exists some form of contractual relationship between the corporation and the city, but this is not essential—at least in any precise form. Finally, and this, though obvious, is of prime importance, regardless of what the legal organization of these libraries may be, they all render service freely to all citizens on precisely the same terms as public libraries under direct municipal control. Quite a number of proprietary and subscription libraries of the sort described in the preceding chapter are still in existence and are performing useful service to their members or subscribers, but such institutions are of course not included here.

The term “incorporated libraries” is frequently used in laws to designate libraries of this sort, but actual incorporation in a legal sense is not essential in all cases, as will be seen later. Moreover, many municipal libraries are managed by incorporated boards of trustees, although these boards are controlled through appointment or other means by the municipality. Such libraries are not classified in this group. Similarly, the term “endowed libraries” is also sometimes used to designate some libraries in this group, but endowment is likewise by no means an indispensable feature.

In attempting to separate this group of libraries from other institutions more properly classed as municipal, it is necessary to make some borderline decisions which are difficult to sustain. Certain city libraries managed by self-perpetuating boards, as in Bridgeport, Colorado Springs, Salem, and Utica, are very similar in form. So also are libraries with incorporated boards, such as those of Queens Borough and Brooklyn, or libraries established and maintained under trust provisions laid down by a will or bequest, as in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. Libraries of this latter type and other similarly organized libraries are included for discussion among municipal libraries with unusually independent boards. Indulgence in hairsplitting in this connection will be avoided as far as possible and attention will be



focused on the essential point that the libraries now to be described are at least partially controlled by organizations entirely distinct from the municipal government.

#### CLASSIFICATION AND GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

No less than fifty-six, or more than one-sixth of all the public libraries in American cities of more than 30,000 population, fall in this category. The geographical distribution of these libraries, as well as their classification as belonging to the corporation or association type, is shown in Table III. In addition to these libraries in the larger cities, there are a great many smaller libraries in this group. These are distributed throughout the country as shown in Table IV.

Historically, these libraries fall generally into two groups. Many of them trace their ancestry directly back to the predecessors of the public library mentioned in chapter i. The story of how these institutions developed into modern public libraries is often fascinating and full of human interest. Many of the other libraries in the list were also founded relatively early and may be described as survivals of the strength and special interests of a past day. The other group is of fairly recent foundation in states or cities where library development has been retarded and the governmental form is as yet in a somewhat transitional stage. In general this type of library is decreasing rather than increasing in numbers, although the recent incorporation of the Charleston (S.C.) Free Library (1930) and the reincorporation of the Lancaster (Pa.) Free Public Library (1934) are exceptions to the rule.

A glance at Tables III and IV immediately discloses the fact that these libraries are very largely confined to the East and South and that the number outside of these regions is scattering and relatively unimportant. The New England group and part of the Central Atlantic group afford examples of those libraries in which the historical background is of special importance, while the southern group includes many libraries of comparatively recent establishment. It is worthy of special comment

TABLE III

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF CORPORATION AND ASSOCIATION  
LIBRARIES IN CITIES OF OVER 30,000 POPULATION

| Region                | Corporation Libraries                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Association Libraries                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| New England*          | Malden, Mass.<br>Pittsfield, Mass.<br>Portland, Me.<br>Providence, R.I.<br>Stamford, Conn.                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Hartford, Conn.<br>Holyoke, Mass.<br>New Britain, Conn.<br>Springfield, Mass.                                                                                                    |
| Central Atlantic      | Amsterdam, N.Y.<br>Auburn, N.Y.<br>Baltimore, Md.<br>Chester, Pa. (Crozier)<br>Chester, Pa. (West End)<br>Elmira, N.Y.<br>Hagerstown, Md. (Washington Co.)<br>Jamestown, N.Y.<br>Johnstown, Pa.<br>Lancaster, Pa.<br>McKeesport, Pa.<br>New York, N.Y.<br>Troy, N.Y.<br>Wilkes-Barre, Pa.<br>Wilmington, Del. | Allentown, Pa.<br>Buffalo, N.Y.<br>Harrisburg, Pa.<br>Hazleton, Pa.<br>Orange, N.J.<br>Rome, N.Y.                                                                                |
| Southern              | Augusta, Ga.<br>Charleston, S.C.<br>Galveston, Tex.<br>Lynchburg, Va.<br>Macon, Ga. (Washington)<br>Memphis, Tenn.<br>Nashville, Tenn.<br>Newport News, Va.<br>Norfolk, Va.<br>Raleigh, N.C.                                                                                                                  | Baton Rouge, La.†<br>Columbia, S.C.<br>Dallas, Tex.‡<br>El Paso, Tex.<br>Fort Worth, Tex.‡<br>Miami, Fla.†<br>Mobile, Ala.<br>Montgomery, Ala.<br>Portsmouth, Va.†<br>Waco, Tex. |
| North Central         | Alton, Ill.<br>Evansville, Ind. (Willard)<br>La Crosse, Wis.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Canton, Ohio<br>Youngstown, Ohio                                                                                                                                                 |
| Mountain and Far West |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Portland, Ore.                                                                                                                                                                   |

\* Cranston, R.I., has several independent public libraries which fall in this class. These are not included in this tabulation.

† Libraries managed by women's clubs.

‡ Partially municipal in status.

that more than one-third of all southern cities in the 30,000-or-over population group are served by libraries of this type.

#### FORM OF ORGANIZATION IN DETAIL

*Legal basis.*—In the form of its legal organization, each of these libraries is an individual case; no two are exactly alike. Minute or individual descriptions are manifestly impossible, for the mass of detail is too great to present in easily comprehended

TABLE IV  
GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF CORPORATION AND  
ASSOCIATION LIBRARIES IN PLACES OF  
UNDER 30,000 POPULATION

| Region                     | Libraries* |
|----------------------------|------------|
| New England.....           | 215        |
| Central Atlantic.....      | 198        |
| Southern.....              | 67         |
| North Central.....         | 41         |
| Mountain and Far West..... | 19         |
| Total.....                 | 540        |

\* U.S. Office of Education, *op. cit.* These figures are undoubtedly considerably below the actual number of these libraries.

form. As a whole it is a legal maze into which it is unnecessary or unprofitable to attempt to penetrate. Even for a single library the situation is frequently of such extreme complexity as to be understood only by a few interested or initiated persons—certainly not by the man in the street. Often the laws, charters, and accompanying documents affecting the foundation and maintenance of a particular library are like some obscure Magna Carta, whose exact provisions are almost forgotten but none the less treasured and triumphantly brought to light in case of need. However, study of individual cases shows that the main points are clear enough and may be stated fairly simply in general terms.

Both the establishment and the continued existence of libraries of this general type are specifically permitted and recognized by provisions in the library laws of thirty states.<sup>3</sup> In

<sup>3</sup> See M. J. Ferguson (comp.), *American Library Laws* (Chicago, 1930), *passim*. States for which such provisions are not shown are Alabama, Arizona, Delaware, Florida,

some cases these laws are very detailed and specific; in others they merely permit municipalities to support such libraries to any extent they may desire.

Examination of the legal basis of this whole group of libraries shows that they have been established and organized in the following different ways:

1. They may be governed by special statutes relating to a particular library. This method accounts for at least seventeen of the libraries listed above, including the two largest, New York and Baltimore. Sometimes a whole series of laws is required to tell the story. Hartford, for instance, has at least four laws covering the library proper and three more covering the Wadsworth Athenaeum, which controls the building in which the library is housed.<sup>4</sup> It frequently becomes necessary to increase the amount of property which the corporation or association is permitted to hold; each time this is done an amendment to the statutes is required. Thus Springfield, Massachusetts, has increased its property provisions successively from \$150,000 to \$600,000, to \$1,500,000, to \$3,000,000, and finally to \$6,000,000.<sup>5</sup>

2. The library may be administered under articles of incorporation obtained from the secretary of state, or other officer authorized to establish corporations. Such charters are issued under the authority of the general library laws mentioned above,<sup>6</sup> or of state laws authorizing the formation of corporations in general,<sup>7</sup> or of corporations of an educational nature.<sup>8</sup> Included in the charter is usually a statement of the purposes of

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Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Virginia.

<sup>4</sup> *Re* Hartford Public Library: acts passed in 1839, 1878, 1893, 1925; *re* Wadsworth Athenaeum: acts passed in 1842, 1886, 1919; Connecticut, *Resolves and Private Laws and Special Acts*, for dates mentioned.

<sup>5</sup> See series of laws quoted in Springfield City Library Association, *Annual Report*, 1929, pp. 37-38.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., La Crosse Public Library, Articles of Incorporation (1885), MS copy.

<sup>7</sup> Rosenberg Library Association, *Charter and By-Laws* (Galveston, 1904).

<sup>8</sup> Carnegie Library of Nashville, Charter of Incorporation (1901), MS copy, recorded in Secretary of State's office, Book O2, p. 80.

the corporation and of its powers as exercised by the board of trustees. These articles of incorporation, supported by the law which authorizes their issuance, thus become the legal basis for the management of the library. This class includes about eighteen of the libraries listed above.

3. In the Texas group of association libraries, the existence of the association is recognized by the city charter, and the extent of its powers is there defined. In still other instances, the city council, acting in a rather informal manner, has merely authorized a woman's club to operate a library on behalf of the city.

*Distinction between corporation and association libraries.*—The outstanding characteristic of all the libraries established in the various ways just enumerated is their more or less complete separation from the municipal government. These libraries serve the people of their cities, but they are not part of the city itself. In order to understand more fully the nature of these institutions, it now becomes necessary to divide them into two main classes and to attempt to define somewhat more closely the terms "corporation" and "association" libraries, which have heretofore been used without exact definition. Although nearly all of the libraries are actually incorporated, there is a rather distinct difference between the corporation proper and the type in which the corporation is a fairly large group usually called the "association."

In the case of the first group the law or charter establishing the library designates by name or in other ways the persons who are to constitute the "body corporate and politic" to be known thereafter by a certain official name. These individuals then become the governing board of the library, and they and their successors actually are the library to all intents and purposes. Outside of the persons designated and others provided for in the charter, there are no other members of the corporation. As a body they have the usual corporate powers of perpetual succession, may sue and be sued, and may have a corporate seal, together with other definitely enumerated powers. In other words, at the head of each of these libraries is a group of indi-



viduals who constitute its governing board and who exercise all the powers granted to the institution.

The very nature of such a body seems almost inevitably to imply that it must be self-perpetuating, and it is therefore not surprising to find that these boards appoint their own successors in all except a few instances. In Wilmington, Delaware, the election is technically based on the voting of shares of corporate stock held in trust, but the practical result is self-election. In Galveston, twenty trustees, who constitute the corporation, elect annually a board of seven directors, who thus become a sort of executive committee. In Lancaster, Pennsylvania, the board is appointed by the County Court; and in one smaller library, the Birchard Library, Fremont, Ohio,<sup>9</sup> the board is similarly appointed by the judge of the Court of Common Pleas. However, self-perpetuation is the general rule.

The story in the case of the "association" libraries is quite different, at least in theory. Here the incorporated (or organized) group is not the managing board but a larger body usually, though not always, designated as an "association." The corporate powers vested in this body are exercised by a board of management elected by the members of the association. This method is almost universal, the only exceptions being in the Texas cities of Dallas and Fort Worth, where the association has power only to nominate board members, who must be confirmed by the City Council.

Reduced to its simplest terms, this distinction between "corporations" and "associations" is merely this: In one case the governing board stands alone, in the other it is the creature of a larger body. This distinction has little effect on the actual administration of the library, but it may have an important bearing on its general welfare as a public function. Before proceeding farther with any analysis of the governmental relations of this whole class of libraries, it will therefore be necessary to examine somewhat more closely the significance of the library association as an organization.

<sup>9</sup> American Library Association Survey, 1926, MS questionnaire form.

*The library association and its importance.*—Whatever the present fact may be, it can safely be asserted that every one of these associations has, at some stage in its history, played an important rôle in the development of public library service in its city. This has usually occurred in one or both of two ways. Either the association is the continuation or direct descendant of an old-type subscription library which later became a free public library, or it was organized for the specific purpose of aiding in the establishment of a public library. Hartford, Connecticut, and Portland, Oregon, are excellent examples of the first group, while several of the Texas and Pennsylvania cities listed above may be cited as examples of the group in which associations were active in founding public libraries in their communities. Springfield, Massachusetts, is really an example of both kinds. In almost all cases the historical motive for the preservation of an old form of organization is still powerful and important.

But history alone cannot justify the continued existence of these associations; due consideration must be given to their present status and condition. First, as to their membership. The number of members on the rolls of the association varies from 1,130 life-memberships in Buffalo, the largest figure reported, down to a number really no larger than the board of trustees itself. As a rule, the membership figures are extremely small. Aside from Buffalo, the only cities reporting a roster of over 200 are Springfield, with about 500; Fort Worth, with 540; and Dallas, with 250. In some instances the exact number of members is a matter of some uncertainty; in others, membership has dwindled almost to the vanishing-point.

Part of the reason for this great variation in membership is due to marked differences in dues. A life-membership in Portland is nominally \$250; in Springfield it is \$50; in Fort Worth it is only \$1.00. In several cities there are no dues at all. Life-memberships in the Buffalo Library were fixed at \$50 but are now perpetuated without cost by the Board of Managers.

The association as a whole holds an annual meeting at which

the principal events are the reading of the reports of the president, librarian, and treasurer, and the election of necessary board members. Unless some matter of unusual or special importance is to come up for discussion (which is seldom), the attendance is small, amounting many times merely to a slightly enlarged meeting of the board of directors. The result is that the board in practice chooses its own successors and that it really is the association. Thus the theoretical difference between the association and the library with an entirely self-perpetuating board largely disappears as a matter of actual practice.

It would be easy to conclude from the foregoing highly summarized account that many of these associations are mere remnants, unimportant survivals of once active and powerful bodies. It might be said that the whole system in many a city is a sort of legal fiction, which is becoming more or less meaningless as time goes on. There is little doubt that such a judgment is only too well justified in some cases.

But it would be unfair at least to a portion of these libraries to let the matter rest at this point. While it is only too evident that the great majority of the controlling associations are inactive except through their boards of management, there always exists the possibility, perhaps remote in some cases, of galvanizing the organization into activity and making it something more than a quiescent force. Just as the members of any society may appear uninterested unless some critical issue appears, so these associations may actually possess a good deal of latent power to be used in time of need. The Jervis Library Association of Rome, New York, has recently been reorganized and its membership broadened, and hopes are entertained by one or two other cities of making their associations more active. Potentially, at least, they constitute "pressure groups" which may exert much influence on behalf of the libraries they control.

Another point often brought forward in support of the continued existence of the association is that it retains the management and control of the library in the hands of a group of persons who are presumably interested in its welfare and its growth.

The association may thus be said to be a device which permits the appointment of persons of high quality to the board and eliminates political considerations in making appointments. In several cities this seems to be the principal reason for keeping the association alive.

*City Library Association of Springfield.*—It is impossible to leave this subject without particular mention of what is easily the outstanding example of a library association still at the zenith of its powers. This is the unique institution called the City Library Association of Springfield, Massachusetts. Founded in 1857, when the city council was unable to establish a public library maintained by municipal funds, it has had from the very beginning the strong backing of "intelligent, cultivated, and enterprising men . . . who have shown their interest by contributing to its funds."<sup>10</sup> Beginning simply as a library, the Association has in the course of years attached to itself a whole galaxy of other educational institutions, all under the control of the Association through its directors. This five-in-one group of institutions now includes the library, an art gallery, an art museum, a museum of natural history, and the museum of the Connecticut Valley Historical Society, the last controlled through an interlocking directorate.<sup>11</sup> The fine buildings in which these institutions are housed form what might be called a small campus, of which the library is a part.

All of "this great plant," land, buildings, museum collections, and the endowments which support them "have come by private gift," with no financial assistance from the city of Springfield.<sup>12</sup> The library itself, however, is supported almost wholly by an appropriation from the city; all but one of its companion institutions are maintained largely by special endowment funds.

Any person may become a life member of the Association by the payment of \$50 in cash or by the contribution of books of

<sup>10</sup> William Rice, "Relations of City Governments to Public Libraries," *Library Journal*, XII (1887), 364-69; see also Springfield City Library Association, *Annual Report*, 1932, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> *Annual Report*, 1932, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.



that value. The latest printed roster of life members shows a total of about five hundred names.<sup>13</sup> The actual management of the Association's various activities is vested in a board of seventeen members, of whom twelve are elected by the Association at its annual meeting. The president and vice-president of the Association, with the mayor, the president of the Common Council, and the superintendent of schools, are ex officio board members.<sup>14</sup> Library affairs proper are under the general supervision of a Library Committee of four members.<sup>15</sup>

The mere record of the Association's extensive contributions to the public welfare is perhaps sufficient reason for the continued success and generous support given by the city. Librarian Rice maintained in 1887<sup>16</sup> that the municipal contribution was but "reasonable interest" on the investment of private capital made by the Association, and the same argument can be made today. Continuous policy, achieved through the direction of two distinguished librarians, whose administrations have covered nearly the entire history of the library, has also been a most important factor in its success.

Certain other associations, particularly that of Portland, Oregon, have been very successful, although in a less unusual and spectacular manner, but it is impossible to multiply examples. Careful weighing of the evidence seems to warrant the conclusion that the associations as a group are not significant at the present time. The exceptions to this general rule are important but not numerous.

It thus becomes evident that while the association as such may contribute something to public interest in the library, and to its support, it does not materially alter the actual powers of the corporation or the board which governs it; neither does its existence result in any change in the relation of the library to the municipal government nor in its method of administration. We may therefore proceed to the consideration of these matters, including, from this point on, both corporations and associations.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 1929, pp. 6-10.

<sup>15</sup> *Annual Report*, 1933, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> See "By-Laws," *ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>16</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 369.



GOVERNING BOARDS OF CORPORATION AND ASSOCIATION  
LIBRARIES

*Powers of boards.*—It is difficult to imagine bodies more powerful or independent than the boards of these private corporation libraries. The trustees of the corporation libraries, chosen by co-optation, owe direct responsibility to no authority higher than themselves; the boards of the association libraries are only slightly less independent. There is ordinarily no serious limitation on their actions, although they are by no means immune to the influence of public opinion. Even the obvious power of the purse wielded by the municipality does not affect a number of them, for they have sufficient endowment to provide for all their needs or for a large part of them. Almost invariably their powers include the right to receive gifts and bequests; to purchase property; to erect or rent buildings; to purchase all books, supplies, and equipment; to appoint the librarian and all employees and fix their salaries; and to make rules and regulations for the use of the library. Such limitations as there are are naturally connected with the purchase of property and the erection of buildings. In the case of library buildings erected with city money, as in Baltimore, for instance, the city may choose to do its own building rather than turn that function over to the library; but this does not affect the legal independence of the board.

To most of these libraries this large measure of independence means the ability to manage their affairs in their own way and, above all, complete freedom from political pressure of any kind. The board is indeed "intrenched beyond the petty strifes of local politics"<sup>17</sup> and free from its "lowering influence."<sup>18</sup> This deep-seated distrust of municipal politics is almost universal among the libraries of the group. Not only was it an important reason for the form of government originally adopted, but it seems to be equally important in the minds of library authorities at the present day as a reason for the continuance of the

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 365.

<sup>18</sup> Lindsay Swift, "Proprietary Libraries and Public Libraries," *Library Journal*, XXXI (1906), c272-74.

form. Unfavorable comparisons are frequently made with conditions in neighboring cities in which the library is a part of the municipal government and therefore subject to political control, and the freedom of the corporate library has more than once been the "envy" of librarians of municipal libraries. Could the New York Public Library, for instance, have maintained its standards if it had been controlled by a Tammany-ridden government?<sup>19</sup> On the whole, it seems evident that the boards of the corporate libraries have fully met their responsibilities in this respect. One or two examples of politics within the board itself have come to light, but in general it cannot be disputed that this group of libraries has been free from the evils of political interference.

*Membership of boards.*—As we have already seen, the members of the governing boards are almost invariably self-chosen or elected by the associations. In twenty-two of the fifty-five libraries analyzed, there are no other members than those so chosen; in other words, there is no public representation on the board. In the remaining libraries a varying degree of municipal representation is found. This is usually accomplished by the naming of from one to three municipal officers as *ex officio* members. The most common choice for this purpose is the mayor, with the superintendent of schools next in favor. The president of the Common Council or other members of the Council are also sometimes named. The presence of these *ex officio* members on the board is rather to be expected when public funds are provided for the support of the library,<sup>20</sup> but this rule is by no means always followed. Usually the *ex officio* members, with the possible exception of the superintendent of schools, are not particularly active. Instances are not unknown where the absence of such officers from meetings is attributed to the fact that they are fearful of being influenced too favorably by the finan-

<sup>19</sup> Cf. R. V. Peel, "The Political Machine of New York City," *American Political Science Review*, XXVII (1933), 611-18.

<sup>20</sup> W. I. Fletcher, "The Proprietary Library in Relation to the Public Library Movement," *Library Journal*, XXXI (1906), c268-72.

cial needs of the library. In one case, La Crosse, Wisconsin, the mayor is ex officio president of the Board and is active in library affairs.

An extension of the ex officio system is found in a few cities in which there are boards of joint membership, made up more or less equally of corporate members and municipal representatives. The leading example of such a joint board is found in Buffalo, where the Board of the Buffalo Public Library is made up of five members representing the old Buffalo Library, with the mayor, superintendent of schools, and Corporation Counsel, ex officio, and two citizens appointed by the mayor. Another important example is Wilmington, Delaware, with ten corporate and seven ex officio members. Still other examples are Elmira, New York;<sup>21</sup> Stamford, Connecticut; and McKeesport, Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania libraries of Allentown, Harrisburg, and Hazleton, which are affiliated with and in part supported by the school districts, have joint boards made up of association and school representatives.

A marked characteristic of the library boards in this group is the large number of members. As a rule, they are much larger than is the case in municipal libraries, ranging from five to thirty-one in number, with an average of thirteen members. In the corporation group, the term of office of trustees is very generally for life, or for an indefinite period; in the association group, membership is almost always for a specified term, three years being the most common figure. However, this distinction between life-membership and a limited term often has little significance, since the common rule is to reappoint members indefinitely. In general, permanence and continuity of tenure are an outstanding feature of these boards. To cite examples from only one city, the present president of the Springfield City Library Association<sup>22</sup> has served as a director since 1887, and reports from 1927 to 1932 record the death of members who had served for periods of thirty, thirty-five, and thirty-nine years.

<sup>21</sup> This library might equally well be classified as a municipal library.

<sup>22</sup> Mr. Nathan D. Bill.

The average length of service of the Springfield board members in office in 1932 was over fourteen years, to which figure should be added, of course, many future years of potential service. In five other cities in this class the average years of service of present members ranged from a low of twelve to a high of fifteen years.

As might be expected with boards of such large membership, meetings are likely to be held less frequently than the almost universal monthly period among municipal libraries. Only slightly more than half of the boards hold monthly meetings. Most of the others usually meet quarterly, while a few meet irregularly and two hold only one stated meeting a year.

It follows naturally that much of the regular business of the board is transacted through a rather elaborate committee system. Nearly always there are executive, administrative, or other similar committees, which have adequate power to pass on routine business and to act in case of need between stated meetings of the whole board. The responsibilities and duties of finance committees are unusually important in these libraries, often including the investment of endowment funds. The librarian is generally not the secretary of the board, although he sometimes performs the detailed work of that office.

*Personnel of boards.*—So much for the official side of the board. More interesting, and probably more significant, is the unofficial or personal side. To begin with, membership on boards such as these is a mark of distinction and is highly prized; many persons not interested in public office are proud to be chosen members. The result, of course, is that the board is almost invariably composed of the "outstanding" or "best" citizens of the community. Eighteen of the twenty-one trustees of the New York Public Library are to be found in *Who's Who*, and not one of them fails to mention the fact that he is a trustee of the Library. The names of Elihu Root, J. Pierpont Morgan, and Cardinal Hayes are only samples from the membership list. Over and over again such a board is described as "the best board in the city," or in terms equally laudatory.

The analysis shown in Table V of the occupations of the members of ten boards of corporations and associations (107 individuals in all, with no ex officio members included) will perhaps prove more enlightening than many words in describing the type of membership.

It is clear that these boards are largely made up of one class of people; they do not remotely approach a cross-section of their

TABLE V  
OCCUPATIONS OF BOARD MEMBERS IN TEN CORPORATE LIBRARIES\*

| Financial                | No. | Business              | No. | Professional            | No. | Miscell.                  | No. |
|--------------------------|-----|-----------------------|-----|-------------------------|-----|---------------------------|-----|
| Bankers.....             | 17  | Manufacturers.....    | 9   | Lawyers.....            | 21  | Women.....                | 5   |
| Capitalists...           | 10  | Merchants...          | 8   | Professors, teachers... | 8   | Retired....               | 2   |
| Corporation executives.. | 5   | Newspaper publisher.. | 1   | Clergy.....             | 7   | Labor represent-ative.... | 1   |
| Broker.....              | 1   |                       |     | Doctors.....            | 5   |                           |     |
|                          |     |                       |     | Engineers...            | 3   |                           |     |
|                          |     |                       |     | Editors.....            | 2   |                           |     |
|                          |     |                       |     | Architect...            | 1   |                           |     |
|                          |     |                       |     | Entomologist            | 1   |                           |     |
| Total....                | 33  | .....                 | 18  | .....                   | 48  | .....                     | 8   |

\* The cities are: Baltimore, Hartford, Jamestown (N.Y.), Malden (Mass.), New York, Portland (Ore.), Providence, Wilkes-Barre, Wilmington (Del.), and Youngstown.

communities. Somewhat as in a club, every effort is made to select a "congenial and appropriate type of person" for membership, with the result that boards are still composed of the sort of "intelligent and cultivated" people Dr. Rice wanted a half-century ago.<sup>23</sup> Economically, the members usually represent the higher levels, although some of them are in modest circumstances. With few exceptions they live in the better residential sections of their cities,<sup>24</sup> and geographical representation of the different parts of a city is difficult to achieve, even if it is desired. The nationality of the members is largely American and English.

<sup>23</sup> Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

<sup>24</sup> See May H. James, *A Sociological Survey of the Providence Public Library* (Providence, 1926), pp. 102-3, but true also in many other cities.



The high average age of board members, which is an inevitable result of life-tenure and renewal of appointments, is a matter for special comment. In six libraries where data were available the average age of members was fifty-three, fifty-six, fifty-seven, fifty-nine, sixty-four, and sixty-seven years. The youngest member found was thirty-three, and he was on a board in which a special effort was being made to add young blood.

In the appointment of members, much care is often given to the actual service which may be rendered by the new member. The presence of many members in the financial group is sometimes due to the board's responsibilities in the investment of its endowment funds. In a few libraries members are found on boards quite frankly because of past or hoped-for bequests. In Providence, membership on the board is officially based on contributions to the endowment fund of the library. Any person who gives \$10,000 to the library may himself serve as a member or may nominate another person to serve in his place, and an additional contribution of \$20,000 entitles the donor to make another nomination.<sup>25</sup> No other instance of this sort has been noted.

Many who read the foregoing pages will assert that these library boards are undemocratic and unrepresentative. In a narrow sense, at least, this is true. The whole tone of the membership is in a high degree conservative. The single labor representative found in the list above is a most unusual exception, and there seems to be little or no attempt to provide for direct representation of the working or small business groups. The inclusion of women is not common, and on many boards women are frankly not wanted. The charters of the three Texas cities of El Paso, Fort Worth, and Waco, which actually require a majority of women on the board, are highly unusual.

But that the facts recited have made any real difference in the kind or type of service rendered by the library cannot be supported by concrete evidence. On the contrary, the claim is sometimes made with much justice that boards of this type are more

<sup>25</sup> Providence Public Library, *Charter and By-Laws* (1926), p. 2.

likely to give the librarian and staff a free hand in book selection and in popular service to the entire community than are many of the boards chosen by municipal authorities. A much more serious difficulty is the question of the ability of such boards to deal in a practical way with the governing bodies of the cities from which they are to receive funds—a point which will receive consideration in a following section.

#### POSITION OF THE LIBRARY STAFF

The picture of stability, continuity, and independence which has thus been sketched for the managing board of this library group is reflected to a large extent in the position of the library staff. As a rule, the chief librarian is a rather powerful administrative officer, whose independence of action is probably somewhat greater than is usual among municipal libraries. Long association of the same board with the same librarian, which is frequent, tends to develop such independence.

In staff appointments the board has absolute freedom of action. None of these libraries is subject to civil service even though the salaries of the staff are paid by the city. A recent effort of Baltimore to put the staff of the Enoch Pratt Free Library under civil service met defeat when the city solicitor decided that the Library, as a private corporation, not only need not conform to civil service regulations but could not even if it so desired.<sup>26</sup> The corporation and association libraries of New York State, with the exception of the Reference Department of the New York Public Library, conform to the state system of certification for librarians, as does La Crosse, Wisconsin. In general, the library-staff member is not considered a city employee; in a number of instances this independence is accompanied by the doubtful privilege of paying a federal income tax on his salary.

These corporate libraries fix the salaries of their staffs and are under no obligation to conform to the general municipal sched-

<sup>26</sup> Letter of city solicitor, June 21, 1933, to the chairman of the City Council Committee on Ways and Means.

ule. There has, however, been a tendency to reduce library salaries in general correspondence with similar reductions in city salaries as a whole. Moreover, there is considerable evidence to the effect that the salary schedule in the corporate libraries tends to be lower than in municipal libraries. However, since the board may make its own rules with respect to vacations and leaves of absence, there is often some advantage to the library-staff member as compared with the municipal employee.

#### FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION AND PROBLEMS

In opening this subject, attention may well be drawn first to the fact that the question of property or money in one form or another has been in large measure the fundamental reason for the establishment of the corporation type of library management and control. Some individual or some association has dedicated to public use certain land, or buildings, or books, or has donated certain funds as an endowment for library service. In order to assure the proper use of this property or money, a special form of organization for the management of the library, satisfactory to the donors, private or collective, has been stipulated. Frequently these requirements have been based on the provisions set forth in a will or similar document. Some practical reflections on this general fact will be reserved until the end of this discussion of financial problems.

*Property rights.*—Because of what has just been said, the question of property ownership is one of considerable interest. Does the property (building, books, or equipment) which is being used for library purposes in a particular city belong to the corporation, or to the city, or is it held jointly? In many places this question is easily answered; in others it is excessively complicated if an absolutely accurate answer is desired. In about three-fourths of the cities title to the library property is vested in the corporation or in the board which controls it. This means, of course, that technically the property is not city property at all, but belongs to the corporation. Primarily, this includes buildings, sites, and equipment, but in most cases it also ap-

parently includes books as well, although positive statements on this point are somewhat hazardous.

However, in a number of places, including several of the larger cities, title to property either resides in the city or is divided between the city and the corporation. In New York, for example, the corporation owns certain branch buildings, and the book stock of the Reference Department, of the Central Circulation Branch, and certain other special collections bought with corporate funds. The city owns the Carnegie branches and their equipment, the central building and its equipment, and the book stocks of the branches, the "central reserve," and the Municipal Reference Library. Even this broad general statement might be refined and qualified in great detail. In Baltimore, practically all of the library property, including the new central building, belongs to the city. In Wilmington, library buildings and sites belong to the city, but the books and equipment to the Institute. In Portland, the central building and one branch belong to the county, and the rest of the property is held by the association. Divided ownership is also found in Buffalo and Youngstown, and city ownership of all property is reported in Dallas, El Paso, Miami, Elmira, McKeesport, and Macon.

To the user of the public library, all this is of little moment. Whether the chair in which he sits or the book which he reads belongs to the city or to a private corporation concerns him not at all. Perhaps some citizens would prefer to use a building built by the city rather than one which legally is the property of a board or association, but they are much more likely to be concerned about its utility and convenience. The main value of such property distinctions seems to lie in the fact that they constitute a sort of lever in dealing with the city, which may be used in case of need. Or, in a better sense, the presence of such property may be used to spur the city on to do its part more fully. We shall see a little later how this works out in practice.

*Contracts between library and city.*—Questions of property rights naturally suggest the matter of contracts between the corporations and the cities which they serve. In a sense it is sur-



prising to find that less than ten of the libraries in this class report the existence of definite contracts. Perhaps this is just another way of saying that the contract is implied rather than formally stated. Both parties understand in a general way what is expected of them and proceed to carry out their responsibilities to the best of their ability. The arrangement is well expressed by one librarian as a "gentleman's agreement" between the parties concerned.

Examination of a number of contracts indicates that these may be very detailed in certain particulars, but also very general and somewhat vague in others. Wilmington Institute has a whole series of six contracts under which its entire income from the city is definitely fixed.<sup>27</sup> Three of them are merely based on an agreement by the library to maintain a collection of a certain size; two others are based on a sort of interest arrangement by which the city pays a certain amount for each \$1,000 bequeathed to the Institute; still another provides for the maintenance of a night watchman.

The New York Public Library's contractual arrangements with the city are based on two very important "agreements" entered into between the Board of Estimate and Apportionment of the city and the Library.<sup>28</sup> One of these affects the "use and occupation" of the central building (the Reference Department); the other is concerned with the acquisition and maintenance of branches (the Circulation Department). The provisions of these agreements are sufficiently detailed in describing such matters as the acquisition of property, the erection of buildings, the ownership of books, etc. With respect to the actual operation of the branches, however, the city merely agrees to provide "adequately" for their support; and the Library in return agrees that the branches "shall be accessible at all reasonable hours and times, free of expense" and subject to regulations "for gen-

<sup>27</sup> The first two of these are printed in Wilmington Institute, *Acts of Incorporation, City Ordinances, Trust Declaration, and By-Laws* (Wilmington, 1923), pp. 26-30.

<sup>28</sup> New York Public Library, *Book of Charters, Wills, Deeds, and Other Official Documents* (New York, 1905), pp. 147-52, 238-48.



eral convenience.”<sup>29</sup> Similarly, in the contract relative to the Reference Department, the corporation agrees that the Library “shall be accessible at all reasonable hours for general use, free of expense . . . . subject to control and regulation . . . . for general convenience.”<sup>30</sup> That such contracts have sufficient teeth, in spite of their rather vague general terms, is demonstrated by the fact that a similar contract between the Brooklyn Public Library and the city was made the basis of a successful suit on the part of the Library for larger appropriations.<sup>31</sup>

Only one case of an exact *quid pro quo* type of contract was found. The Seymour Library, of Auburn, New York, receives from the city nine cents for every volume circulated for home use. In spite of this example, it is obvious that the making of exact contracts is too complicated a matter to consider seriously. In general, it seems best to trust to the common sense and good intentions of both parties—a procedure which has been generally followed.

*Income of the library.*—The income of these libraries is derived in part from public sources and in part from private sources. Of the latter more will be said in another place. In allotting public funds to the library the usual method followed is the direct appropriation of a definite amount from the general funds of the city. Almost always this appropriation is made as a lump sum which the library is allowed to subdivide as it sees fit. Only four cases of segregated appropriations were noted, one of these, however, being the New York Public Library.

In ten cities in the over-30,000 population group, funds are allocated by means of a mill tax levied for library purposes. In the four Texas association-type libraries the library tax rate is definitely fixed by the city charters. The libraries of Buffalo, Memphis, and La Crosse are also supported by taxes levied by the city; in Allentown and Hazleton the tax is levied by the school district, and in Portland, Oregon, and the Washington County Free Library, Maryland (Hagerstown), by the county.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>31</sup> 226 N.Y. Supp. 491 (1928).

*Financial administration.*—In the custody of its funds, from public as well as private sources, and in its financial administration the corporate library has much freedom of action. In a large majority of instances the library receives the amounts appropriated by the city, deposits them in its own depository in the custody of its own treasurer, makes its purchases directly, pays its bills through its own system of vouchers and warrants, and keeps its accounts according to its own classification. Further, its accounts are usually audited by its own auditors. Typically, then, the library belonging to this group is a very independent fiscal authority. Its business affairs are conducted in practically the same manner as those of any other private corporation.

Exceptions to this general rule, though not numerous, exhibit an interesting trend in the direction of more and more municipal supervision, at least of those portions of the library's funds which are appropriated from municipal sources. Of course, such municipal supervision does not extend to the private income of the library, which is practically always handled by the board in its own way.<sup>32</sup> The cities of New York, Baltimore, and Malden may be cited as examples of municipal supervision and control, in part at least, of the public portion of the library's funds. In all of these places city control has increased in amount quite recently.

In New York this question relates only to funds appropriated for the use of the Circulation Department of the Public Library. Since the Reference Department is supported by income from endowments, it does not come under municipal regulations. Although the Library authorities might readily insist on their independence in fiscal administration as a legal right, it has seemed wise to conform in large measure to the financial procedure of the city. As yet recent legislation providing<sup>33</sup> for centralized purchasing in New York has affected only a few items purchased by the Library, which still does almost all its own buying.

<sup>32</sup> Elmira is an exception; there library trust funds are held in the city treasury.

<sup>33</sup> *Laws of New York*, 1933, chap. 829.

In Baltimore and Malden the libraries do their own purchasing but make payments through the city finance officers. Vouchers are prepared by the libraries for all claims and sent to the city accounting department, which makes out individual checks for the amounts due. In Malden the authority of the city in this connection is based on the state law for the supervision of municipal accounts.<sup>34</sup> In Baltimore the city Building Department has assumed complete control over all building repairs and upkeep, and the amount required for this service is not included in the library's budget but is carried as an item in the city's own budget. This is due, of course, to the fact that the city owns the central building and branches.

The general rule, then, for financial procedure is that the corporations are still largely independent of municipal control and supervision, but there are evidences that this complete separation is beginning to break down. The chances are that this tendency will grow as municipal governments become more business-like and more thorough in their own financial procedures.

*Effect of the library's corporate name.*—There still remain to be considered certain larger questions of financial policy and results. They involve in large part the matter of private endowments available for library use and the effect of these funds on the amounts received from public sources. We are interested in seeing how well, financially speaking, these libraries fare at the hands of the city.

To begin with, there is the question of the library's corporate name, especially when it includes the name of a donor. This is not as small a matter as might appear at first thought, and is in large part, though not wholly, of financial interest. When the name of a donor is so firmly attached to the library that it must be repeated through the years at every incoming telephone call,<sup>35</sup> there may be some question concerning the cumulative effect on the public mind as to the nature of the institution. This is a sufficiently difficult problem in municipal libraries, but

<sup>34</sup> Massachusetts, *General Laws*, 1932, chap. 44.

<sup>35</sup> Frederic Nelson, "Quinquennial," *Baltimore Sun*, February 25, 1934, editorial page.

it seems even more acute in these corporate institutions.<sup>36</sup> Some of them have changed their names or subordinated them. "Reuben McMillan Free Library" has become a by-line carried under the more general name "Youngstown Public Library." The words "Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations" are still attached to "New York Public Library" in legal documents, but appear to be less and less used in publications such as the annual report and the various book bulletins issued by the Library. In Pennsylvania the "A. Herr Smith Memorial Library" has just changed its name to "Lancaster Free Public Library" "in an effort to obtain better public support." In Memphis the Cossitt Library, aiding in a tax-collection drive, put out a sign reading "Cossitt Library is a Memphis tax-supported institution. Taxes must be paid if we continue to operate." New buildings are a difficult problem in this connection. Instead of "Wilmington Institute," the library in that city spreads across its façade the words "Wilmington Public Library," so that all who read may know what manner of place it is. The building erected with county funds for the use of the Library Association of Portland, Oregon, carries the legend "Public Library. Built by Multnomah County."<sup>37</sup> But Baltimore has become accustomed (and the librarian reconciled) to the name "Enoch Pratt," and that name looms large on the new city-built library completed in 1933.<sup>38</sup>

*Present importance of past bequests.*—But though cities may become accustomed to personal names, and even in some cases may learn to cherish them, there is no way in which a bequest of long standing may be made to continue its proportionate importance through the ensuing years. Although it may have seemed of enormous significance at the inception of the public

<sup>36</sup> Many municipal libraries have personal names; conversely many corporation libraries are simply called "public libraries," e.g., Malden Public Library, Hartford Public Library, Providence Public Library.

<sup>37</sup> Library Association, Portland, Ore., *Public Library of Multnomah County, Central Building, Portland, Oregon* (Portland, 1913), p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> P. M. McCauley and J. L. Wheeler, "Baltimore's New Public Library Building," *Library Journal*, LVIII (1933), 386-93; picture on p. 386.



library movement in a particular city, it may, when scrutinized cold-bloodedly at the present time, appear relatively unimportant. Yet the conditions made at the time of the original gift have been crystallized into law, and the library is still maintained under provisions which have little relation to the actual facts of today. This is not always the case, but study of the library history of many of the cities here considered will provide numerous examples.

The city of Memphis ordinarily raises by taxation in a single year a larger sum than F. H. Cossitt gave years ago for a library building, but the library is still organized and operated under conditions determined by his executors. When Enoch Pratt gave a central building and four branches and a capital sum sufficient to produce an annuity of \$50,000 a year for a library system in Baltimore, it was hailed as an epoch-making event. For some years the Enoch Pratt Free Library was operated entirely on this income, without aid from the city.<sup>39</sup> Today the "stake" of Enoch Pratt in Baltimore's library comprises his original annuity of \$50,000, now about one-eighth of the annual expenditures of the Library, four old branches and their sites, and an equity of perhaps \$300,000<sup>40</sup> in the new central building, about one-tenth of its cost. Still another example is that of Stamford, Connecticut, where the gift of as small a sum as \$10,000, plus \$25,000 in private subscriptions, resulted in the organization of a library corporation with half of its trustees appointed by the donor and able to perpetuate themselves.

Of course, examples of an exactly contrary nature may readily be cited, in which the value of private bequests and endowments has kept pace with the public contributions, and in which it would obviously be unfair to say that the private interest had become unimportant. Outstanding instances of this sort are the New York Public Library, with its huge endowment<sup>41</sup> and with

<sup>39</sup> Enoch Pratt Free Library, *Report*, 1906, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> Realized by the sale of the old library property.

<sup>41</sup> The assets of the Library in 1932 were \$49,815, 405.91 (New York Public Library, *Report*, 1932, p. 18).



incalculable values in its book collections; Springfield, with the unique and still growing group of institutions already mentioned; and Providence, with an income from endowments several times the municipal appropriation.

The foregoing statement is made with no intent to belittle or undervalue the generosity and public spirit of many individual donors and many organizations whose benefactions have been responsible for the beginnings of libraries in scores of American cities. Let due credit and honor be given them for their important and strategic contributions to the library movement. The only point made here is that control and management of many libraries was determined under conditions which have materially changed in the course of years.

*Adequacy of public support.*—Still another difficult question of a similar nature must be frankly faced. Does the private corporation library, controlled by boards outside the city government, and often endowed to a greater or less extent, receive adequate support from public sources? There is little doubt that, in this connection, the word corporation or association "hurts," as one librarian frankly puts it. And the "hurt," of course, is mainly a financial one. The fact that a library is a private institution seems to make little difference in public opinion with respect to its use, but many librarians feel that it does make a real difference in the willingness of the city to contribute to its support.

Before attempting to answer our question by the use of mass statistics for the whole group, it will be well to particularize to some extent. Looking first at the four libraries in this group which stand highest in per capita expenditures—Springfield, Massachusetts (\$1.34); Providence (\$1.09); Portland, Oregon (\$1.00); and Stamford, Connecticut (\$.95)<sup>42</sup>—we find that in all but Providence the great bulk of current expenditures comes from public funds. In Springfield it is undoubtedly a fact that the name of the Association is a decided asset rather than a liability, and the same is true in Portland. In Providence, ex-

<sup>42</sup> In this discussion, expenditures are taken from U.S. Office of Education, *Statistics of Public, Society and School Libraries, 1929* (Bulletin No. 37 [1930]). Population figures are for 1930.

tremely shrewd financial administration over a period of many years has made the corporate income of the library very large, with the city's contribution relatively low.

But results such as the foregoing are far from typical. Of the fifty-six libraries in the over-30,000 population group considered in this chapter, six receive no support whatever from public funds, and several others receive so little as to be almost in the same class. Three of these libraries, in Galveston, Lynchburg, and Wilkes-Barre, have large endowments which produce sufficient income to make it apparently unnecessary for them to ask for public support. Two of these had an expenditure of sixty-four cents per capita in 1929, and the third of sixty-five cents. These amounts are not high when judged by American Library Association standards but must be considered good when compared with other cities in the same states. In the other three cities without public support the annual per capita expenditures were fifty-one,<sup>43</sup> twenty-eight, and four cents, respectively. Certainly it can scarcely be disputed that all of these libraries might have made good use of public funds.

The case of New York is naturally of much interest in this connection. Library expenditures for the whole city (from all sources and for all three public library systems) amounted in 1929 to sixty-nine cents per capita and to fifty-three cents per capita for the Circulation Department of the New York Public Library alone for the three boroughs it serves. These figures indicate only a fair amount of public support. Perhaps more significant than the actual figures is the fact that when the large increase of \$350,000 in the city appropriation for the Circulation Department was made in 1925, the Staff Association, composed of the "rank and file of the employees," played a rôle of much importance in persuading the city authorities to make the increase.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> For this city, income, which is much higher than expenditures for the year 1929, is used to be on the safe side.

<sup>44</sup> Elizabeth Stuyvesant, "Waking Up Father Knickerbocker," *Library Journal*, L (1925), 997-99; New York Public Library, *Report*, 1925, pp. 12, 65; "The Library's Needs" (Editorial), *New York Times*, July 27, 1925, p. 12, col. 4.

For all the libraries in the group, the median figure for annual expenditures per capita in 1929 from both public and private sources was thirty-nine cents, a decidedly disappointing amount. Even when the southern cities, known to be low in any such calculations, are omitted from the tabulation, the median figure is still only fifty-nine cents per capita. The significant point here is that the obvious opportunity to combine public and private funds to produce an unusually generous income for the library has in general been missed. In no case has a large per capita income from public funds been added to an already large per capita income from private sources.

To conclude that the foregoing figures prove conclusively that control of libraries by private non-municipal corporations has resulted in lowered appropriations is of course unwarranted. However, it may be submitted that the figures suggest that possibility, and the testimony of numerous librarians, as already stated, is quite positive on this point. There is no doubt that it is difficult to persuade the official mind, or even the public mind, that a privately managed corporation, especially when it is known to be endowed, really needs public funds. Conversely, it is sometimes difficult to persuade the trustees of such an institution that it is necessary or even wise to ask for public funds in really adequate amounts.

#### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nowhere among American libraries are feelings and opinions so firmly entrenched, points of view so solidified, and traditions so established as in this group of corporate institutions. They are indeed the aristocrats of the library scene, even though the word "aristocrat" be used in its most benevolent sense. Associated in their active management and in their supporting groups are typically the strongest names and representatives of the best families in their communities. It may safely be predicted that sudden and sweeping changes in governmental form will be resisted and will come gradually, if at all. No illusions need be cherished on this point. The legal difficulties involved

in any structural alterations alone are more than considerable. Moreover, the highly individual character of each library makes broad and sweeping conclusions regarding the group as a whole difficult and dangerous, for the advantage is always on the side of the individual institution which can readily show that the general rule does not apply to its particular situation.

Very generally controlling authorities, both boards and librarians, are satisfied with existing types of organization. The power of independent action is a condition appreciated by everyone. When to this is added freedom from annoying interference of many kinds, the resulting situation is most attractive. It is possible, however, to sense a growing tendency to question some of these advantages, and this tendency is quite likely to increase.

The arguments in favor of this type of library control have already been developed or suggested earlier in this chapter. They may now be collected and summarized in the following form:

1. Continuity of policy and stability in administration are assured. Sudden or violent changes in the governing board are practically impossible, and the detailed work of the library is likely to exhibit similar steadiness. When the library is assured of a large income from endowments, then this condition of stability is even more marked, for the private income acts as a cushion against fluctuations in income from public funds.

2. The caliber of board membership is high and commands respect and admiration.

3. The library is free from the dangers symbolized in the word "politics." The fear of political influence and contamination is tremendously real in these libraries, and it must be admitted that such fears are justified to a considerable extent.

In opposition to these favorable arguments it is possible to make the simple reply that the very virtues of the system may become its vices. Continuity and stability may degenerate into stagnation and mere complacency. A system in which length of tenure in board membership is such an outstanding feature is admittedly susceptible to this possibility. Escape from the real



or imagined dangers of politics may easily lead only to ultra-conservative and undemocratic management. Even the admirable qualities of the board may result in its failure to represent groups and points of view which really deserve consideration.

Point-by-point argument, such as that suggested in the last two paragraphs, might be carried on indefinitely, probably without material change in the viewpoints of the participants. More helpful, perhaps, would be an attempt to penetrate into what might be called the essential realities of particular situations. The word "reality" as here used might in some cases mean something wholly tangible, such as a large endowment or an important accumulation of buildings or other property. On the other hand, it might mean something quite intangible, such as a deep-seated public opinion favorable to an association or to the management of a library in a given city.

In places where either of these two general situations prevails, there would seem to be ample ground for the retention of the present organization. In cities where the library commands a large amount of public enthusiasm and support, and where such support has a real meaning, it would be folly to be merely doctrinaire and to attempt changes for theoretical reasons. Similar logic would call for the maintenance of governmental organizations in which property rights are heavily involved. Nor would it be sensible to turn an institution over into the hands of an admittedly corrupt political ring.

In cities where the existing organization seems worthy of continuance, a degree of compromise may well be considered. The dangers and difficulties which have been suggested throughout this chapter are still to be reckoned with, and two suggestions seem worthy of serious consideration. The first would be to increase materially, probably to the extent of equal membership, the proportion of public representatives on the board of management. Preferably this would not be by an increased number of ex officio members, for these have been shown to be of dubious value, but rather by citizens appointed by the mayor or council. Nor should the total membership of the board be in-



creased; rather it should be materially reduced, for most of the boards are far too large.

The second suggestion is that the term of office of board members be shortened. Appointment for life results, as has been shown, in building up boards whose average age is decidedly too great. In some instances a positive limitation on the length of service of board members might be required; in others, appointments for limited terms, with an effort to discourage the tradition of continued reappointment, might be sufficient.

Along with these more or less mechanical devices, there must be a movement toward greater "democracy" in board membership. Even though the present boards may not have failed to be representative in a broad sense, they should become so in the more literal sense that membership is given to representatives of important population groups. It would be most heartening to see some of these corporate boards which are now beyond the reach of local government move voluntarily in the directions here suggested. The action would be not only enlightened but politic as well.

So much for those organizations which seem to have earned the right to continued existence in their present form. With respect to many of the others, the truth is that they present a picture which is essentially unreal and fictitious. A type of organization set up years ago because of special conditions connected with the founding of the library, or a donation generous in terms of an earlier period, but now relatively unimportant, cannot forever determine the legal form of the library. Situations such as these do not represent at all the actual facts of what library service is, or ought to be, in many cities. In not a few instances they may be a positive hindrance to progress. Some method must be found to make present conditions more nearly conform to reality.

There is little doubt that it would be advantageous for many of the corporate libraries to become wholly and frankly municipal. The initial plunge into close association with local government might be difficult, but it is more than possible that many of

the dangers would prove imaginary and that the results might even be highly satisfactory. Decisions of similar difficulty, with apparently equal dangers, were made by some of these same libraries when they changed from strictly association libraries to public libraries.<sup>45</sup> Among small libraries, the continuance of association or corporation management seems particularly unfortunate, especially when they have scarcely passed beyond the subscription stage. Experienced state library extension workers feel that their continued existence in the present form prevents the establishment of adequate public library service.

In the natural course of political events, the type of governmental organization found in many of the libraries considered in this chapter seems to be doomed by the improvement and advance of local government itself. As time goes on the situations under which such institutions were created will become more and more unreal and unimportant, and the tendency toward unity of control and management will be more marked. In not a few instances it would appear to be in the interest of sound library development to acquiesce immediately in the inevitable change which must come sooner or later. Those libraries which retain the present form of organization must continue to demonstrate that special circumstances of real importance make it worthy to survive.

<sup>45</sup> Library Association of Portland, Oregon, *Annual Report*, 1900-1901, p. 27.

## CHAPTER IV

### SCHOOL-DISTRICT PUBLIC LIBRARIES

AS A matter of governmental theory, the structural integration of the public library with the educational system of the state is a most attractive notion. We have already seen that De Witt Clinton and some of the early educational leaders in New York more than a century ago attempted to make general public library service part and parcel of the school-district system.<sup>1</sup> In recent times, Cubberley in his utopian scheme for the educational code of the mythical state of Osceola placed the county library under the administrative control of the County Board of Education and the state library under the State Board of Education.<sup>2</sup> Speaking at the American Library Association Conference in 1933, Commissioner of Education Zook advocated in general terms closer union of the library and the school system.<sup>3</sup> Among the political scientists, the idea has appealed to W. B. Munro, who proposed making the library an integral part "of the city's educational plant" and recommended that it be transferred to the "regular school authorities";<sup>4</sup> and W. A. Schaper similarly urged the inclusion of the library in the "educational establishment."<sup>5</sup> A strong advocate of this general theory from the point of view of the librarian was William H. Brett, of Cleveland, who laid down the

<sup>1</sup> See account of the district libraries, pp. 8-14.

<sup>2</sup> E. P. Cubberley, *State and County Educational Reorganization: The Revised Constitution and School Code of the State of Osceola* (New York, 1914), pp. 95-99.

<sup>3</sup> G. F. Zook, "A New Trend in Education," American Library Association, *Bulletin*, XXVII (1933), 584.

<sup>4</sup> *Municipal Government and Administration* (New York, 1923), II, 344-45.

<sup>5</sup> "The Place of the Public Library in the Administration of a City," *National Municipal Review*, III (1914), 672-81.

dictum that the library should be "recognized in law" as a part of the educational machinery of government.<sup>6</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, that one of the most important and interesting types of library government is the school-district public library, in which the unit of library service is the school district, rather than the city or other agency of local government. In this type the library becomes to a greater or less degree a part of the machinery of the school or educational organization.<sup>7</sup>

#### LEGAL NATURE OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT AND THE SCHOOL-DISTRICT LIBRARY

In discussing the general nature of these school-district libraries, two rather obvious points must be emphasized. The first is that the libraries under discussion are not school libraries in a narrow sense; they are actually libraries designed to serve the public at large. As a matter of fact, their connection with the schools varies greatly from place to place—a subject which will receive attention as the various subtypes are described.

The second point is the legal connection of the library with the educational system. From the point of view of service to the man in the street, this distinction may mean little or nothing; but from the point of view of the library's administrative well-being, its support, and the area it serves, it is a matter of very great importance indeed. The distinction between school district and city is so marked that, if one desires to be technical, he may say that the *city* of Cleveland, the most important example in this group, has no public library at all. An examination of the financial statistics of Ohio cities<sup>8</sup> indicates that this *city* spends nothing at all for public libraries. Again, the annual report of the city of Dayton, especially interesting because of the

<sup>6</sup> Brett, "Comments on Library Legislation," American Library Association, *Bulletin*, X (1916), 319-24.

<sup>7</sup> American Library Association, *Survey of Libraries in the United States* (Chicago, 1926), II, 255.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., Ohio, Bureau of Inspection and Public Offices, *Comparative Statistics, Cities of Ohio*, 1932, p. 78.

city's long record of efficient administration, makes no reference to the Dayton Public Library either in the complete organization chart of the city government or in the list of city officers.<sup>9</sup> The simple explanation of these apparent anomalies lies in the nature of the school district as a legal entity and of public education as a function of government; and it is therefore necessary to show briefly how these matters affect the status of the public library.

First and foremost, it should be recalled that public education in America has become a matter of such importance that it is almost everywhere regarded as a concern of the state, and the organization of the school system is therefore wholly regulated and controlled by the state through its constitution and through legislative enactments. True, the state may delegate its authority with respect to educational matters in some degree to a municipality<sup>10</sup> or other local unit of government, but the function remains one in which the state interest is paramount. If the local unit has any authority in connection with the school system, it exists by virtue of such delegation of what is, essentially, the authority of the state.<sup>11</sup>

This means that the fundamental legal basis of the school system is determined by the state legislature, acting in conformity with the provisions—frequently very detailed—of the state constitution which provide for a system of state schools. Thus “the

<sup>9</sup> Dayton, *Annual Report*, 1931, esp. pp. 5-6, 13.

<sup>10</sup> The word “municipality” is sometimes defined broadly to mean any unit of local government, including the school district. In this chapter, however, it is of course used in contrast with the school district.

<sup>11</sup> For the foregoing general conclusion, and for much of what follows, consult such authorities as the following: Newton Edwards, *The Courts and the Public Schools* (Chicago, 1933), chaps. i-iii; Newton Edwards, “Legal Relation between School Districts and Municipalities,” *Elementary School Journal*, XXX (1930), 734-45; E. P. Cubberley, *State School Administration* (Boston, 1927), chap. v; “Legal Basis of Education” (N.E.A. Committee Report), *Review of Educational Research*, III (1933), 369-468; F. L. Engelhardt and others, *District Organization and Secondary Education* (U.S. Office of Education, Bulletin No. 17 [1932], Monograph No. 8); William Anderson, *American City Government* (New York, 1925), pp. 90-96; C. C. Maxey, *Urban Democracy* (Boston, 1929), chap. xix.



state school law is supreme,"<sup>12</sup> and the whole structure is subject to modification or revision at any time by general laws passed by the state legislature.

Almost universally, the educational unit which the state has created is called the "school district," and this agency, as a branch of the state government, is in charge of the local administration of education. The school district is actually "a quasi-corporation, created by the state,"<sup>13</sup> which is an entirely separate legal entity from the city or town or other unit which it serves. Even though the school district may occupy the same geographical area as the municipal unit, it is still a separate corporation, charged with the conduct of a state function and not subordinate to the municipal corporation.<sup>14</sup>

In actual practice, the position of the school district relative to the municipality is not quite as separate and distinct as the general principles just laid down might indicate. Whatever the theory may be with reference to the legal independence of the school district, the fact is that there are many cities in which the municipal corporation actually exercises considerable authority over school affairs.<sup>15</sup> This is particularly true when it comes to the question of the financial support of the school system. A recent survey shows that school boards have complete control of school levies and expenditures in at least twenty-seven states and that in the remaining states there is much variation in their fiscal independence.<sup>16</sup> But even though city councils may in part control school appropriations, the power of school boards to determine their own budgets remains largely undisputed.<sup>17</sup>

Applied specifically to the status of libraries, the foregoing

<sup>12</sup> E. P. Cubberley, *State School Administration* (Boston, 1927), p. 128.

<sup>13</sup> Edwards, *The Courts and the Public Schools*, p. 34.

<sup>14</sup> C. H. Judd, *Problems of Education in the United States* (New York, 1933), p. 120.

<sup>15</sup> Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

<sup>16</sup> Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, *Fiscal Relationships between City and School Authorities* (Detroit, 1931), p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*; see also Edwards, "Legal Relation between School Districts and Municipalities," *Elementary School Journal*, XXX (1930), 745.

general principles have several important corollaries. In the first place, whether we concede that the public library is a "local concern" or not,<sup>18</sup> the fact that certain libraries are attached to the units of school government makes them in effect concerns of the state. At least it is certain that such libraries are subject to the control of general state laws and that their form of organization may be changed at the will of the state legislature. Similarly, such libraries are ordinarily unaffected by changes in the type of municipal government, even in home-rule cities, although these changes may be of fundamental importance to the government of the city itself. Thus recent changes from the mayor-council form of government to the manager plan and back again to the mayor-council form have meant almost literally nothing to the Cleveland Public Library.

In the second place, there is the question of the territorial unit served by the library. Naturally, this is the school district, not the city, and the two are not necessarily identical in area. Ordinarily this is a cause of minor difficulties only as far as the administration of the library is concerned. For example, it is not always easy to determine the boundaries of the school district for the purpose of registering library borrowers.<sup>19</sup> Another difficulty, distressing to the accurate statistician, is that the population of the school district sometimes cannot be exactly determined, and the best one can say is that its population is that of the city, "plus."<sup>20</sup> Since the school district is often somewhat larger than the city, such variations may be a positive advantage in that the service area of the library conforms somewhat more nearly to its proper sphere of influence. However, when it becomes a question of fundamental changes in the area of school districts, the matter may become much more serious. If all school-district organization is to be "considered as experimental,"<sup>21</sup> then frequent changes in the size of districts may be an-

<sup>18</sup> See discussion in chap. ii, pp. 42-47.

<sup>19</sup> Mentioned rather frequently by librarians of school-district libraries.

<sup>20</sup> *Ohio Libraries*, I (April, 1927), No. 20.

<sup>21</sup> Engelhardt and others, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

ticipated, with correspondingly difficult results as far as libraries are concerned. In West Virginia the adoption of the county district unit for the schools seems to have changed the school-district libraries of that state into county libraries overnight.<sup>22</sup> It must be remembered that a change of this sort affects library service much more fundamentally than it does that of the schools. In the case of the schools, which already provide for all children, it is largely a question of reorganization; in the case of libraries, where service is seldom universal, it means more territory to serve and therefore greatly enlarged appropriations, and often new local agencies, if proper service is to be given.

Finally, the separate organization of the school district as a fiscal unit usually means that the school-district library funds are derived from school sources rather than from municipal sources. The question of the relative ease with which appropriations may be obtained from these two units has certainly been a most important consideration in the development and continuation of school-district libraries, as will be seen in the detailed descriptions which follow.

#### DEVELOPMENT AND DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL- DISTRICT LIBRARIES

Most of the school-district libraries in the United States today are concentrated in a belt of states running across the country from New York to Lake Michigan. Included in this strip are New York, Delaware, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan. In all of these states the school-district public library is relatively important, but in none is it the only type of library government found. Outside of this group examples are scattering but are to be found in at least half-a-dozen other states.

In all, forty cities with a population of 30,000 or over have public libraries of the school-district type, of which Cleveland, Indianapolis, and Kansas City, Missouri, are the outstanding

<sup>22</sup> See below, pp. 124-25.

examples. The distribution of these cities and the two main subdivisions into which the libraries fall are shown in Table VI.

Before any attempt is made to describe in detail the organization of the various libraries in the school-district class, it is im-

TABLE VI  
SCHOOL-DISTRICT LIBRARIES IN CITIES OF OVER  
30,000 POPULATION\*

| I. LIBRARIES WITH SEPARATE LIBRARY BOARDS                |                       |                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Ohio Group                                               | Ohio ( <i>cont.</i> ) | Miscellaneous Group |
| Akron                                                    | Lorain                | Altoona, Pa.        |
| Cleveland                                                | Mansfield             | Charleston, W.Va.   |
| Cleveland Heights                                        | Marion                | Easton, Pa.         |
| Dayton                                                   | Newark                | Eric, Pa.           |
| East Cleveland                                           | Springfield           | Mount Vernon, N.Y.  |
| Hamilton                                                 | Toledo                | Saginaw, Mich.      |
| Lakewood                                                 | Warren                | York, Pa.           |
| Lima                                                     | Zanesville            |                     |
| 2. LIBRARIES ADMINISTERED DIRECTLY BY BOARD OF EDUCATION |                       |                     |
| Michigan Group                                           | Indiana Group         | Miscellaneous Group |
| Battle Creek                                             | Fort Wayne            | Columbus, Ga.       |
| Flint                                                    | Indianapolis          | Huntington, W.Va.   |
| Hamtramck                                                | Kokomo                | Kansas City, Kan.   |
| (School and Public Library)                              | South Bend            | Kansas City, Mo.    |
| Kalamazoo                                                | Terre Haute           | Newburgh, N.Y.      |
| Lansing                                                  |                       | Norristown, Pa.     |
| Muskegon                                                 |                       |                     |

\* Not included here, but very closely allied to the libraries in this group, are the public libraries of Bay City, Detroit, and Grand Rapids, Mich., and New Rochelle and Yonkers, N.Y.

portant to trace the development of the type in the different states in which it is now found. We are fully as much interested in the underlying reasons which have caused this particular type to flourish, or at least to survive, in certain parts of the country as we are in its exact governmental form. The early

flourishing of the district library in New York and several of the states of the old Northwest Territory from 1835 on was briefly described in chapter i. In the discussion which now follows, the situation in each of the states in which this type of library is important will be separately considered.

*School-district libraries in Ohio.*—As a group, the school-district libraries of Ohio constitute one of the most independent and powerful types of library organization to be found in the United States today. Since all of them are operated under the provisions of a general state library law, they form one of the largest groups of libraries all governed according to a single uniform plan, with almost no variation in details. Furthermore, their identical legal position causes them to be interested in a common legislative program, and it may be added that they have developed strong and intelligent leadership in the handling of their legislative affairs.

The Ohio district library system of today springs from two main sources—one relatively old and the other of very recent origin. About a third of them represent the natural development of the old school-district type; these began their existence as agencies of the school districts and have always been of this form.<sup>23</sup> Included in this group are the important libraries of Cleveland<sup>24</sup> and Dayton.<sup>25</sup> As late as 1922 the number of such libraries in the state was only thirty-three.<sup>26</sup>

The second and numerically more important source for the development of the school-district libraries is to be found in the history of tax legislation in Ohio. Most of the changes in the governmental position of the libraries have been quite frankly due to the necessity of finding adequate revenue. The first financial difficulty encountered was the passage of that well-known early example of tax limitation, the Smith One Per Cent Act, in 1911. The drastic limitations on the taxing power of

<sup>23</sup> See list of thirty-one such libraries in existence in 1908 in Ohio State Library, *Monthly Bulletin*, V (1909), I.

<sup>24</sup> C. B. Galbreath (comp.), *Sketches of Ohio Libraries* (Columbus, 1902), p. 121.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>26</sup> *Ohio Libraries*, I (March, 1926), No. 12.



cities imposed by this law made the position of the numerous municipal libraries in the state increasingly difficult. Since these libraries derived their income from the cities, and the cities themselves were in serious financial straits, the libraries naturally suffered.<sup>27</sup> These conditions, coupled with the passage in 1921 of legislation very favorable to the school-district libraries, provided the proper stage-setting for a sweeping change in the governmental relationships of municipal libraries and for the further rapid development of the district system. The amended library law placed the library tax outside the school levy and made it additional to all other levies.<sup>28</sup>

From this point on, it was merely a matter of common sense and enlightened self-interest for the public libraries to shift from the municipal or association form of organization to the school-district type and for newly established libraries to organize under the district law. While the municipal libraries were suffering to the point of closing their doors, the district libraries found themselves with ample revenue at their command. Under the active sponsorship of the State Library through its Organization Division, the shift to the school-district type was effected in almost wholesale fashion. Library after library deserted the municipal ranks, until in 1927 the number of city or township libraries had fallen to twenty and the number of school-district libraries had correspondingly increased to 105.<sup>29</sup> Another phase of the movement was the passage of an amendment to the district library law making the appointment of a separate library board mandatory;<sup>30</sup> this caused the gradual disappearance of the type of library organization in which the boards of education retained the administration of the library directly in their own

<sup>27</sup> R. C. Atkinson, *Effects of Tax Limitation upon Local Finance in Ohio, 1911 to 1922* (Cleveland, 1923), pp. 83-114.

<sup>28</sup> *Laws of Ohio*, 109, 1921, p. 237.

<sup>29</sup> The story of this movement is told in *Ohio Libraries*, I (1923-27), Nos. 1-20. See also "Ohio," *Library Journal*, LI (1926), 192; H. S. Hirshberg, "The State's Responsibility for Library Service," *Library Journal*, XLVIII (1923), 657.

<sup>30</sup> *Laws of Ohio*, 110, 1923, p. 409.

hands. In retrospect this Ohio campaign is seen to be the most rapidly effected large-scale change of status in American library history.

Thus in 1930 the district libraries, with a separate legal organization and a separate property-tax levy with the high maximum of one and a half mills,<sup>31</sup> appeared to be as safe as human ingenuity could make them, when they were almost overwhelmed by a new tax-limitation measure, this time in the form of a constitutional amendment which limited the general property tax for all taxing authorities to a maximum of fifteen mills on the dollar.<sup>32</sup> This amendment and subsequent legislation, although it did not actually repeal the provisions for the library property tax, made them practically inoperative and forced the libraries to shift to a new form of tax, which will be described later.

The picture of the Ohio district libraries shows a numerous and powerful group of ably led libraries well supported by their communities and with many powerful friends throughout the state. The foregoing account may have overemphasized the financial aspects of their development. Not so often stressed, but of much importance nevertheless, has been the desire of the library authorities to remove the institutions they control as far as possible from the taint of politics in a state well known for its political vicissitudes, which have more than once involved the State Library.

*School-district libraries in Michigan.*—The list of libraries attached to the governmental mechanism of the educational system in Michigan is next to that of Ohio in importance. This fact is due to two interlocking reasons. The first of these is the historical significance of school-district libraries in Michigan, which, as we have already seen,<sup>33</sup> have been important from the very inception of the library movement in the state. In spite of the many changes in the legislation affecting these libraries,

<sup>31</sup> *Throckmorton's 1930 Annotated Code of Ohio*, secs. 7631-43.

<sup>32</sup> *Constitution of Ohio*, art. xii, sec. 2.

<sup>33</sup> See p. 13.

they have continued to be an important part of the Michigan library tradition and are now a firmly entrenched and important group, numbering some fifty-seven out of a total of 235 public libraries in the state. Seven of the fifteen cities of over 30,000 population may very definitely be classified as school-district libraries; and three others are technically, at least, in the same class.

But history alone would probably not have accounted for the continued importance of this group. As in Ohio, much weight must be attached to a distinct financial advantage which from the beginning has made the school connection of the libraries attractive. The explanation of this point involves some consideration of the Michigan system of assigning penal fines to the support of libraries, which has been in continuous force since the adoption of the first state constitution in 1835.<sup>34</sup> The present constitution provides that "all fines assessed and collected . . . for any breach of the penal laws shall be exclusively applied to the support of . . . libraries."<sup>35</sup> The laws making this constitutional provision effective have from the outset required that the proceeds of these fines shall be distributed by county treasurers to the various townships, school districts, and cities certified by state superintendents of public instruction.<sup>36</sup> This provision has meant that a school-district library was always sure of getting its share of the penal fines. In some cities, where the libraries were not of the school-district type, these funds have gone to the libraries of the schools, instead of to the municipal libraries.<sup>37</sup> Thus there has always been a definite tactical advantage in favor of the school-district library.

As to the practical working of this curious provision, about the best that can be said for it is that it has for a long period produced a considerable amount of money and has provided re-

<sup>34</sup> J. E. M. Vander Ploeg, "Penal Fines as Applied to the Support of Libraries in Michigan" (unpublished Master's thesis, Library School, University of Illinois, 1929).

<sup>35</sup> *Constitution*, 1908, art. xi, sec. 14.

<sup>36</sup> Michigan, *Compiled Laws*, 1929, sec. 7663.

<sup>37</sup> As in Jackson, for instance.

sources for many small libraries which undoubtedly would never have had any library funds at all. The amount secured from fines has varied greatly from county to county and from year to year. Worse still, it is widely dispersed in small amounts among 6,623 school districts and 46 townships,<sup>38</sup> which has inevitably meant waste and diversion. In spite of these difficulties, the state clings to the plan because it is imbedded in the constitution and because it does, after all, bring in a considerable sum which might otherwise be lost to the libraries.

*School-district libraries in Pennsylvania.*—The public library laws of Pennsylvania are very sharply divided into two parts. The first embraces the laws affecting the “municipal libraries,” i.e., the libraries of counties, cities, boroughs, towns, or townships; these laws constitute the library code of the state.<sup>39</sup> The second portion of the library law is concerned with the “public school libraries” and is a part of the school code.<sup>40</sup>

Legislation for public school libraries was first passed in 1895 and has been continued in force down to the present time largely at the instance of important public libraries established under the original law, particularly Erie, founded in 1897, and Easton, reorganized in 1901, the two leading libraries in the group.<sup>41</sup> The total number of public school libraries in the state in 1932 was thirty-three, including five in cities of over 30,000.<sup>42</sup> On behalf of the boards of education it must be said that they have sometimes assumed responsibility for public library service when the city authorities have failed to act.

It is evident that there has been some doubt as to whether the words “public school libraries” in the school code meant libra-

<sup>38</sup> Michigan, Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Report*, 1929-31, pp. 104-6.

<sup>39</sup> Pennsylvania State Library, Library Extension Division, *Laws of Pennsylvania Relating to the Establishment and Maintenance of Free, Public, Nonsectarian Libraries* (1932).

<sup>40</sup> *Proposed School Code*, 1934, secs. 1500-1517.

<sup>41</sup> E. L. Matthews, “Public Libraries of Pennsylvania,” *Pennsylvania Library Notes*, XIV (1934), 402-9.

<sup>42</sup> *Pennsylvania Library Notes*, XIII (1932), 162-68.

ries for the general public or merely libraries for students in the schools.<sup>43</sup> Many of the so-called "public" libraries are actually school libraries in the main, and the interests and convenience of the general adult public have not always been sufficiently consulted. This is, of course, only one more manifestation of the difficulty of giving adequate service to schools and public alike in the smaller communities.

Probably because of these facts, the Library Extension Division of the State Library has thrown the weight of its influence strongly toward the development of municipal libraries rather than public school libraries—a policy exactly opposite to that noted in Ohio. In particular, this has been the goal in the attempt to transform the numerous association libraries of the state into municipal libraries. Unless there is a marked change in point of view, it is likely that the school-district type of library organization will continue to be of subordinate importance.

*School-district libraries in Indiana.*—The history of public library development in Indiana indicates very clearly that the school-connected public library is a survival of an older form of organization rather than a still expanding group as is the case in Ohio. Some twenty-five or more Indiana libraries were originally organized as public libraries under the direction of boards of education.<sup>44</sup> Many of these were established under general laws passed in 1881 and 1883, which permitted the founding of such libraries. Indianapolis was organized under a still earlier act of the same sort, passed in 1871.<sup>45</sup> About fourteen of these libraries have continued the old form, but very few libraries of this type have been established since 1901, in which year a general library law providing for the establishment of municipal libraries under separate boards of trustees was passed.

The Public Library Commission of the state, also established in 1901, almost from the beginning actively sponsored the estab-

<sup>43</sup> Matthews, *loc. cit.*

<sup>44</sup> W. E. Henry, *Municipal and Institutional Libraries of Indiana: History, Condition and Management* (Indianapolis, 1904), *passim*.

<sup>45</sup> *Laws of the State of Indiana*, 1871, chap. xv, March 3, 1871.



lishment of new libraries under what it called the "excellent" municipal library law of 1901, as amended, and strongly recommended the reorganization under its provisions of all libraries established under older laws.<sup>46</sup> The same policy has been followed by the successor to the Commission, the Indiana Library and Historical Department. Undoubtedly the active and influential Indiana Library Trustees' Association has also been an important factor in the development of municipal libraries as opposed to libraries managed by the "school cities."

The school-district libraries of Indiana, then, are a small and stationary group, as far as numbers go, with but few examples at the present time. Included in the group, however, are Indianapolis and several other of the larger libraries of the state. At the present time no special financial advantage attaches to either the municipal or the school-district type of library, since the county boards of tax adjustment now have general power to revise all local tax levies, including those of the schools and of the municipal libraries as well.

*School-district libraries in West Virginia.*—Although the number of school-district libraries in West Virginia is not large, their situation is of special interest because it illustrates the difficulties caused by a sudden change in the size of school districts. About half of the libraries in the state are of the school-district type, including the important cities of Charleston, Huntington, and Parkersburg. Until 1933 Wheeling also belonged to this group.

Up to 1933 the schools of West Virginia were administered through a system of local districts, including some fifty or more "independent" districts, all of which were chartered by special acts of the state legislature.<sup>47</sup> Under the powers granted by the charters, some of the districts established public libraries. Then suddenly the whole situation was changed by the passage in 1933 of a county-unit school-district law, which abolished all the independent districts and made the county the unit of school adminis-

<sup>46</sup> Indiana Public Library Commission, *Report*, 1901-4, pp. 8-9.

<sup>47</sup> Information from the office of the State Board of Education, Charleston.

tration.<sup>48</sup> This statute put the existing school-district libraries plainly at the mercy of the new county boards of education. Libraries originally created for the purpose of serving a city school district now have no real legal status except as the county boards see fit to appropriate funds to continue them. Presumably, since the tax support of the district is county wide, these libraries have more or less automatically become county libraries, although they are not adequately equipped to perform this service. Some efforts were made to turn the libraries back to the cities, but these came to nothing because of the general financial crisis caused by the passage of a tax-limitation law. Wheeling, it should be added, escaped from this difficult situation by securing the passage of special legislation making it a county library under a separate board appointed by the Circuit Court.<sup>49</sup> Although the position of the libraries at the moment is critical, it may be cleared up by adjustments in the tax situation. County-wide service, in this state of few public libraries, should be continued if possible, either under the board of education, as at present, or under some such plan as that adopted by Wheeling.

*School-district libraries in New York.*—In view of the early history of the school-district libraries in New York, it is not surprising that connection between the school district and the public library has been maintained to a considerable extent. Under the present library laws of the state the school-district library managed by its own elected library board is an alternative form of library organization. There are at present 74 examples of this type of library out of a total of 694 public libraries in the state. Only 3 of these, however, are in cities, the rest being found in villages and towns; Mount Vernon is the only example in the group of cities of over 30,000 population. The Library Extension Division of the State Education Department is very sympathetic toward this group of libraries, since the school districts have often been more favorably disposed toward public libraries than have towns and villages.

<sup>48</sup> *Acts of West Virginia*, 1933, Extraordinary Session, chap. 8.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. 118.

In addition to the district libraries under their own boards, New York also has a very small group of six libraries still controlled directly by boards of education. Newburgh is the largest library thus organized. Official library opinion, from the days of Melvil Dewey down to the present time, has been quite definitely opposed to the management of public libraries in this manner.<sup>50</sup>

*School-district libraries in other states.*—Aside from the state groups which have just been reviewed, the school-district library is a comparatively rare and unimportant type. Laws permitting the organization of such libraries, either as alternatives to other forms of public libraries or under special conditions, are found in California, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Missouri, Nevada, and Washington. In Delaware this is the only type of public library provided for by general law, but only eight or ten small libraries are organized under this law.<sup>51</sup> In the whole group of states just mentioned there is only one example of outstanding importance, Kansas City, Missouri; and the number of smaller libraries is relatively small.

Summarizing, it is apparent that only in two states, Ohio and Delaware, is the school-district library the preferred type, and in Delaware, as we have seen, it is unimportant. In Michigan and New York, library opinion is more or less neutral as between school-district and municipal libraries. It seems entirely safe to say that elsewhere throughout the country this type of library is essentially a survival of an earlier form which is gradually diminishing in number rather than actively developing. In general, state library extension agencies, with the exceptions noted above, are decidedly lukewarm about the governmental connection of the library and the school and definitely prefer municipal or county affiliation for the library.

School-district libraries may conveniently be subdivided into

<sup>50</sup> Asa Wynkoop, "What Makes a Good Library Trustee," *New York Libraries*, X (1926), 77-79; other information regarding New York district libraries from F. L. Tolman, director, Library Extension Division, State Education Department.

<sup>51</sup> M. J. Ferguson (comp.), *American Library Laws* (Chicago, 1930), *passim*; Colorado, *Compiled Laws* (1921), sec. 8286; Delaware, *Revised Statutes*, 1915, secs. 936-51.

two classes: (1) those managed by separate library boards and (2) those managed directly by boards of education. This distinction is much more than a matter of form. Between the two types there are real differences in the independence of library control and in the resulting methods of administration. These two classes will next be considered in the order named.

#### SCHOOL-DISTRICT LIBRARIES MANAGED BY SEPARATE LIBRARY BOARDS

The common characteristic of all the libraries in cities of over 30,000 population which fall in this class is that they are governed by library boards appointed by the boards of education. Beyond that point there are many variations. Within the class as a whole, the largest subgroup possessing uniform characteristics is made up of the Ohio district libraries, whose history and development has already received attention.

*The Ohio type.*—The governing authority of the Ohio school-district public libraries is a board of seven library trustees appointed by the Board of Education.<sup>52</sup> The term of office of the trustees is seven years, one member going out of office each year. Aside from this single function of appointment, the power of the Board of Education over the library is almost literally nil. The library board submits its annual report to the Board of Education, but this is very much a matter of form. The budget of the library passes through the hands of the Board of Education on its way to the County Budget Commission, but is merely transmitted without revision. The Board of Education has no power of removal over library trustees and has no authority over the library's income. Apparently this method of appointment of the library board has in general resulted in the selection of well-qualified library trustees. There is some evidence to support the conclusion that boards appointed in this manner are likely to be superior in quality to those appointed by city councils, and improvement has been noted in one or two cities.

In view of what has been said, we may expect to find that the

<sup>52</sup> *Throckmorton's 1930 Annotated Code of Ohio*, sec. 7635.



library board is a powerful administrative authority. Indeed, this type of board is among the strongest in the country. There is no power of library management, outside of taxation and self-appointment, which it does not possess. The governing statute does not expressly designate the board as a corporate body,<sup>53</sup> but it appears to be so in everything except name.

In its own name the board holds title to library property of every kind and may accept gifts and bequests. It may acquire real estate, lease property, erect buildings, and may even, after a popular election, issue building bonds. It has full power over the expenditure of library funds and may make all necessary purchases for library purposes at its own discretion. It has full power of appointment and of fixing the salaries of officers and staff of the library.<sup>54</sup>

In the administration of their financial and business affairs, these district libraries may be described as completely independent fiscal agencies. The library board appoints its own treasurer, to whom the library funds are turned over by the county, and the funds are then deposited in an official depository selected by the library in accordance with the provisions of the general code.<sup>55</sup> From this point on, all financial transactions are entirely in the hands of the library. It orders all books, supplies, and equipment directly; it prepares vouchers and pays all bills by its own checks; it keeps its own accounts, which are the final official record of the financial transactions of the library. No approval or authorization of expenditures and payments by city, school-district, or county authorities is required. However, all the library accounts are subject to inspection and audit by the State Bureau of Inspection and Supervision of Public Offices. Under the provisions of the Ohio public accounting law<sup>56</sup> this Bureau makes a very thorough and searching examination of library accounts every two or three years. It also has power

<sup>53</sup> President Emil Joseph of the Cleveland Board of Library Trustees is emphatic in stating that the Board is not a corporation.

<sup>54</sup> *Throckmorton's 1930 Annotated Code of Ohio*, secs. 7637-38-1, 4007-18.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 7640-1.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, secs. 274-88.



to prescribe the forms of accounts used and apparently exercises this function to a considerable extent.

This system of fiscal administration, although it places heavy responsibilities on the libraries, seems to have important advantages. The library has full control over its funds and full knowledge of its financial transactions and condition at all times. It is perhaps more expensive to the library than a central accounting system would be, but the chances are that the latter would be more expensive in its total cost, because of necessary duplication of records. At any rate, the librarians seem well satisfied with the system as a whole.<sup>57</sup>

As already noted above, the constitutional tax-limitation amendment of 1931 threw the whole question of tax support of the Ohio school-district libraries into a chaotic situation. After years of reliance on a special tax levy on property, it suddenly became necessary to shift the whole basis of library support to a new tax. Following an almost kaleidoscopic series of changes in laws and court decisions, the situation has been at least temporarily stabilized sufficiently to permit description. Under the provisions of a very complicated law, library income, along with that of certain other governmental units, is now derived from the proceeds of a classified tax on intangible property.<sup>58</sup> The library's share comes from that portion of the tax collected within the county, and the law therefore now requires that libraries shall give service "on equal terms" to all portions of the county except those already receiving library service. In a sense, this means that these libraries have become county libraries. Any citizen residing in a portion of the county now without library service has the right to use any existing library in the county.

The authority which determines the amount of the library appropriation is the County Budget Commission, composed of the county auditor, county treasurer, and county prosecutor.

<sup>57</sup> The facts in the foregoing paragraph were obtained in part from questionnaires and in part from personal visits to Cleveland, Toledo, and Dayton.

<sup>58</sup> *Laws of Ohio*, 115, 1933, pp. 548-600.

Before this body the cities, the school districts, the public libraries, and certain park and sanitary districts of the county appear to defend their respective budgets. To a considerable extent they are in competition with each other. When allotted, the library's appropriation is treated as a lump sum, which the library board may segregate as it sees fit.

At first the receipts from the intangibles tax were disappointing, but indications for 1934 are that, with the aid of the preferential provisions favoring libraries now a part of the law, income will be considerably increased, perhaps to 80 per cent or more of the old level. However, it must be realized that the whole tax situation is still most uncertain. If the legislature should decide to repeal or modify the intangibles tax law, it might be necessary to shift the basis of library support once more, perhaps to the income tax.

In attempting to assess the significant aspects of this Ohio system, the first generalization which must be made is that the library exists as an almost wholly separate governmental authority. It is very definitely not a part of the city; it is certainly not a part of the county, and only in a very incomplete way is it part of the school district. With its board appointed by the school district, its income derived from an appropriation made by the County Budget Commission, and with its primary and principal service to the people of the city, it is indeed an interesting example of a separate *ad hoc* authority. In law and in administrative practice, it is frequently mentioned as an independent authority, more or less on a parity with the city, the county, the school district, and the park boards.

In the second place, while there is much historical background for the development of this type of library,<sup>59</sup> one searches in vain for any philosophical exposition of the importance of the governmental connection between the public library and the public school system. Librarian Brett of Cleveland hinted at

<sup>59</sup> The great leader of this group, Cleveland, has been governed in this manner for more than fifty years. Cf. L. P. Ayres and Adele McKinnie, *The Public Library and the Public Schools* (Cleveland, 1916), p. 12.

the idea,<sup>60</sup> but it is probably true that he thought of the educational connection primarily as a means of securing the wider extension of library service in which he was so vitally interested. John G. White, the great president of the Cleveland library board, in his reports constantly emphasized the educational interests of the library<sup>61</sup> but regarded it as a separate institution.

Further, the school board and the library board are, as we have seen, entirely distinct administrative units. The separation between them is carried to the point that the law specifically provides that no member or officer of the Board of Education shall be a member of the library board.<sup>62</sup> That there is a slight threat of control of the library board through the appointing power and that it is a matter of wisdom to co-operate with the educational authorities may be inferred from observation and reading of reports. But, on the whole, it is impossible to escape the general conclusion that there is no definite and positive unity of function and purpose between the schools and the library. They are not thought of as a single unified organization but rather are regarded as two distinct educational authorities, covering related but separate fields.

The strict governmental separation just described in large measure accounts for the fact that the administrative connection between public libraries and school libraries in Ohio has not been great. Since the library is the library of the school district, it might be expected that unitary administration of school and public library service would be rather common. Cleveland, of course, is a striking example of joint administration under a contract between the Board of Education and the Board of Library Trustees. This arrangement seems to be in part due to the fact that the library is of the school-district type. Unified administration of school and public libraries is also found in Lorain and perhaps in other smaller places.

<sup>60</sup> Brett, *loc. cit.*

<sup>61</sup> See, e.g., Cleveland Public Library, *Annual Report*, 1915, pp. 22-23.

<sup>62</sup> *Throckmorton's 1930 Annotated Code of Ohio*, sec. 7636.

On the other hand, high-school libraries are separately administered in Toledo, Dayton, Akron, Marion, and Warren. Some combination school and community branches are to be found in Toledo and Dayton, but their number tends to decrease rather than to increase. On the whole, the situation in these Ohio cities in this respect seems not to be greatly different from cities where the public library is under municipal control. If the school board and the library board wish to contract for joint library service, they may do so as they might in any city. It is sufficiently clear that the usual problems inherent in the relationship of school libraries and public libraries are present in Ohio about in the same degree as elsewhere.<sup>63</sup>

Financially, the school-district libraries of Ohio under the old special library tax were far more fortunate than the municipal libraries. In 1930 their ratio of expenditures to total expenditures of local government was 2.2 per cent, as compared with a ratio of 0.8 per cent for the municipal libraries.<sup>64</sup> Today, of course, all Ohio libraries receive their appropriations in the same manner under the intangibles tax law, and this marked differential may disappear to some extent. However, the fact that appropriations are in practice being based comparatively on the old "high-level" figures still gives the school-district libraries a considerable advantage in this respect.

The future of this important group of libraries is full of interesting possibilities. Already two important principles have been developed in connection with the new tax laws. The first is the support of the library through a tax other than the time-honored general property tax—a tax, moreover, which is levied by the state in a uniform manner throughout its whole area. The courts have held that this tax must be used in the county of its origin,<sup>65</sup> but this does not wholly close the door to the possi-

<sup>63</sup> Information from interviews and from U.S. Office of Education, *Statistics of Public, Society and School Libraries, 1929*, Bulletin No. 37 (1930).

<sup>64</sup> Information from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Financial Statistics of Cities of 30,000 and over, 1930*, Tables 13 and 14. National average ratio for all cities in the country is 1.4 per cent. It should be noted that these figures are for operation only and do not include capital outlays.

<sup>65</sup> *Friedlander v. Gorman*, 184 N.E. 530, 126 Ohio St. 163 (1933).



bility of the use of surplus receipts for equalization purposes. Second, the requirement that service be given on a county-wide basis has extended library service of at least a partial nature to all counties in which there are now public libraries. Even though the libraries are not financially ready to assume this burden in any complete way, it may ultimately mean practically complete service for the entire state. The possible combination of state-wide service with a state-wide and state-levied tax earmarked in part for libraries is certainly most attractive. As matters now stand, the school-district connection of these libraries is very tenuous indeed; it is almost a misnomer to classify them in this group.

Aside from Ohio and the district libraries in New York towns and villages, there is no large group of school-district libraries managed by separate library boards. The few examples are relatively scattering and need not be discussed at length.

*Pennsylvania type.*—In Pennsylvania, the public libraries of Erie, Easton, Altoona, and a few smaller cities are organized under the provisions of the library article of the state school code. This places the libraries under the management and supervision of boards composed of five members appointed by the Board of School Directors, with the president of the latter board and the superintendent of schools as additional *ex officio* members.

These Pennsylvania boards are considerably less independent and powerful than the Ohio boards just described. The school boards retain much greater control, at least as a matter of law, over the administration of the libraries. For one thing, the board of education is the sole judge of whether there shall be a library board or whether it shall retain the library under its own control. Moreover, the two principal school executive officers are *ex officio* members of the library board and are active in their duties. Even the rules and regulations for the management of the libraries made by the library board are subject to the approval of the Board of School Directors. Further, the secretary of the school board is *ex officio* secretary of the library



board. The library board, however, has full control of appointments and fixes staff salaries.<sup>66</sup>

In the financial administration of the libraries, control by the school board is equally marked. All of these libraries are supported by direct appropriations from school funds, which in Pennsylvania are derived from taxes levied by the school directors.<sup>67</sup> Library budgets are submitted to the school board, and a lump sum is appropriated for library purposes by that body. The amount so appropriated must not exceed a sum equal to one mill on the dollar. All funds are in the hands of the finance officers of the school district and are paid out on regular school orders in the same manner as other school payments. Accounts are kept by the school finance officers and sometimes also by the library. In one of the libraries all purchases are made by the school purchasing agent, and in another supplies and equipment are purchased in the same manner.

These Pennsylvania libraries, then, are bona fide school-district libraries with the school boards very definitely in control.<sup>68</sup> Even here, however, there is no complete centralization of all library service in the hands of a single librarian. In Erie, for example, the senior and junior high school libraries are administered separately by their own librarians. On the other hand, all the Erie branch libraries are located in school buildings, a fact which is probably due to the type of organization.

*Miscellaneous examples.*—Aside from the cases already described there are only three other examples of school-district libraries managed by separate library boards in cities of over 30,000 population. These are Saginaw, Michigan; Charleston, West Virginia; and Mount Vernon, New York. Each, of course, is a special case.

Saginaw is an interesting combination of the school-district form of organization with the Hoyt Library, an endowed library

<sup>66</sup> *Proposed School Code*, 1934, sec. 1504.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 800.

<sup>68</sup> This is also decidedly true of York, which is a special case, with a board of twelve "managers," appointed by the Board of School Directors (York, *Annual Report of the Public Schools*, 1930-31, pp. 144-51).

of the corporation type. By the device of naming the five self-perpetuating trustees of the Hoyt Library as the Library Commission of the school district, administrative unity has been secured, although legally the two parts are still separate. As trustees of the Hoyt Library the board has the usual broad powers of the corporation type of library; as the governing body of the school-district library it has somewhat more limited powers. The financial transactions of the Hoyt Library are managed entirely by the board itself; those of the district library pass through the hands of the district finance officers, and the Board of Education makes an appropriation for the library from school funds. Although rather complicated in form, this organization is unusually stable, and the results have been very successful. Naturally there can be little question as to the independence of the library board.<sup>69</sup>

The case of Charleston exemplifies all the difficulties at present found among the West Virginia district libraries. The library board of twelve members originally appointed by the Board of Education of the Charleston independent school district now functions under the direction of the County Board of Education. The latter Board retains rather close control over library affairs and reserves the right of approval over practically all actions of the library board. School libraries are administered separately under the direction of the school board, and a branch library for negroes is also managed as a separate unit with its own board appointed by the Board of Education. The principal value of the library board appears to have been as a focus for the very considerable civic interest in the library.<sup>70</sup>

Mount Vernon is one of the New York libraries still functioning as an agency of the school district rather than of the city with which the district is coterminous. The Board of Education is a distinct governmental unit with power to pass its own budget, even over the veto of the mayor. From its own tax receipts it makes an appropriation for the maintenance of the library.

<sup>69</sup> Michigan, *Compiled Laws*, 1929, sec. 7233, par. i.

<sup>70</sup> West Virginia, *Acts*, 1911, chap. 74; 1917, chap. 73; 1927, chap. 123.

The library is managed by a library board of five members, appointed by the Board of Education. The library board has the usual powers of administration, but all powers relating to the purchase or renting of property and erection of buildings reside in the hands of the school board. This library is a true example of the school-district type.

*Mixed types.*—On the borderline between the school-district and the municipal type of library are the libraries of several cities which might be classified in either group. In the three Michigan cities of Detroit, Grand Rapids, and Bay City, the public libraries are legally designated as the libraries of the school districts, and the school-district connection is often emphasized. In Detroit and Bay City the library boards are appointed by the boards of education, and in Grand Rapids the board is elected by the people. In practically all other particulars, however, the libraries are attached to the municipal government, especially with reference to their financial support. In Grand Rapids the school-district connection is undoubtedly responsible for the combination of school and public library service and for the location of all but one or two branches in school buildings. On the other hand, Detroit and Bay City are examples of the most separate type of school-library service.

Two New York cities, New Rochelle<sup>71</sup> and Yonkers, are in somewhat the same position. Both of these cities have library boards appointed by the boards of education, but in all other respects are part of the municipal structure. Mixed types of this sort are in general similar to the involved relationship which the school district itself often bears to the city. It seems best for our purposes to classify all the libraries mentioned in the municipal group.

#### LIBRARIES ADMINISTERED DIRECTLY BY BOARDS OF EDUCATION

Outside of Ohio, New York, and Delaware, by far the largest number of school-connected public libraries are administered

<sup>71</sup> New York, *Local Laws*, 1932, p. 261.

under the direct control of the boards of education. Included in this group are some fifty Michigan libraries, among them, for example, Flint, Lansing, Kalamazoo, Muskegon, and Battle Creek. The School and Public Library of Hamtramck also belongs in this class but is not wholly typical, since there is also a municipal public library in the same city. Indiana has a number of larger cities, headed by Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, and South Bend, and some smaller places, in this group. Pennsylvania shows more than a score of examples of the type, of which only Norristown has a population of over 30,000. Outside of these three states the number is rather scattering. California has a very thorough law for union high-school district libraries, but only four actual examples.<sup>72</sup> In New York only half-a-dozen such libraries remain. The only two large libraries of this sort in the country, and therefore the outstanding examples, are Indianapolis and Kansas City, Missouri.

Of course, it is readily understood that this form of organization connects the library very positively with the whole educational program of government. The libraries of this type are controlled by the same authority which is responsible for public primary and secondary education, and hence their absorption into the educational system is even more complete than is the case with school-district libraries controlled by separate library boards. In the instances about to be considered there is opportunity for a unified educational policy including both schools and libraries in a broad program.

In analyzing the governmental relationships of these libraries it seems best to regard them as a group, because state lines appear to have no special significance in this connection. Matters relating to the government and administration of the library will first be considered, then questions of taxation and finance, and in conclusion certain general comments on the system as a whole will be made.

*Administrative questions.*—At the outset it should be noted that the board of education here takes the place of the city coun-

<sup>72</sup> *General Laws of California*, 1931 (Deering), Act 7519, secs. 6.570-6.723.



cil in its relations to the library. Whether the library is a "department" of the school system is in part a question of definition. In about half of the larger libraries studied, it is clearly nothing more or less than a department; in the other half it is sufficiently independent to warrant description by some other term, although the distinction is admittedly rather vague. Among the smaller libraries the status of a department appears to be more common.

In dealing with the library, the board of education sometimes relies in part upon a library committee, and in other cases acts only as a whole. As yet, actual practice in the larger cities is somewhat in favor of the library committee. The growing tendency of school boards to discard the whole committee system in favor of the committee of the whole plan of administration will in time naturally reduce the number of separate library committees. This has already occurred in Indianapolis, for instance. In Flint, where the school-board committees have been reduced to two, Education and Business, the library deals mainly with the Business Committee. In Columbus, Georgia, by resolution of the mayor and Board of Aldermen, the school board is declared to be the library board,<sup>73</sup> and as a library board it has four committees devoted to library matters. This is obviously a special case. In Kansas City and Lansing the library committees are of considerable importance, but in no instance may it be said that the library committee approaches in importance, or takes the place of, a separate library board.

Such attention as the school boards as a whole give to library matters is largely at their regular general meetings. Here the record is pretty clear that the amount of time devoted to library affairs is not great; only two or three librarians are at all satisfied on this point. Too often library affairs are the "last subjects" discussed and too seldom are they matters for "first attention." Kalamazoo avoids this difficulty by regularly scheduling public library business for first consideration at each mid-month meeting of the board. Ann Arbor has a special meeting

<sup>73</sup> Columbus (Ga.), *Annual Report of the Columbus Public Schools*, 1931, p. 140.



once a year at which the annual report of the library is read. But at best it is unreasonable to expect that busy boards of education can find much time to devote to libraries.

Perhaps the most important administrative question which arises in this connection is that of the relation of the librarian to the superintendent of schools. Is the librarian the peer of the superintendent, a co-ordinate authority, or is he a subordinate, perhaps only a department head? Or to put the question another way: Is the relation of the superintendent to the board comparable to that of the city manager to the city council and is the superintendent the executive officer of the school board for all its concerns, including the library? This is no mere academic question; it has been a real issue at one time or another in many places. Moreover, it is a question that is really never settled, for it requires only a resolution of the school board to change completely the existing relationship of the two officials. Any change in the incumbent of either office is likely to raise it anew. Modern practice in school administration is quite definitely committed to the concentration of executive authority in the hands of the superintendent, and this is likely to bring the question still further to the fore.

In the main, this battle (and in some cases it has been exactly that) has been won by the librarians in the larger cities. Only three libraries in cities of over 30,000 population state that the librarian is definitely responsible to the superintendent. In at least two other instances the librarian reports to the board "through" the superintendent, but this apparently does not seriously jeopardize his independence. Among the smaller libraries, however, subordination of the librarian to the superintendent is much more common. Too often this means domination by an official who is interested in libraries mainly as school agencies.

It seems fair to say that the superintendent's closest and first interest is the school and the school library rather than library service to the general public. He would be scarcely human if this were not true. As a school man his primary responsibility

is in the school system and in bringing it up to standard. It is significant to note that in all cities in the 30,000 group where the superintendent is the administrative superior of the librarian, school library service is favored over public library service. Perhaps the librarian is fully as library-minded as the superintendent is school-minded, but to allow the librarian to deal directly with the board of education would appear to be only fair to the institution he represents. At best he will have a sufficiently difficult time, for from the viewpoint of the board he is representing a lesser interest.

The position of the staff in a library of this type raises questions quite similar in principle and in fact to those connected with the status of the library staff in a university. Appointments, of course, are made by the board of education, usually on recommendation of the librarian, or of the superintendent in case the latter is the superior officer. Authority to fix or change salaries, too, is vested in the board. But the really important matter is the relative rank of the library staff member as compared with teachers. On the whole, it would appear that the public librarian has been even less successful than his university library colleague in his struggle for equal status with the teaching staff. If the library staff is graded at all, the grading system is usually not the same as that for teachers, and in most cases the librarians' salary scale is lower than that of teachers. Flint is the only example found in which library grades are practically exactly comparable to those of the teaching staff, with salaries at the same general level. Undoubtedly the fact that there is no system of certification of librarians in any of the states here in question is at least a partial explanation of the situation. Since he is uncertificated, the librarian is always in danger of being classified with the non-professional or clerical group of school-department employees.

In one matter concerned with the staff, however, public libraries under school boards compare very favorably with municipal libraries. Their record with respect to political interference, which usually means political dictation of appointments, ap-

pears to be extremely clean. Very little taint of this sort is to be detected. Just as the schools are relatively free in making teacher appointments, so the library experiences comparatively little difficulty in appointing competent people to its staff.

In the actual administration of the library, the librarian has a rather free hand. With the board of education devoting very little direct attention to the library, it certainly cannot be said to interfere unduly in its internal administration, as is sometimes the case with library boards. The librarian ordinarily refers only matters of importance to the board and himself makes decisions regarding routine matters and questions of lesser importance. Rules and regulations for the use of the library, of course, are finally promulgated by the board, but even here one finds instances in which the librarian is allowed, or allows himself, considerable latitude in changing rules affecting the use of the library.

Finally in this series of administrative problems, we need to consider the relation of the school library proper to the public library. In libraries of this type, if anywhere, we should expect to find complete unity of administration of the library service of a city to all its people, whether in or out of school. The form of organization, certainly, is favorable to the development of a unified and correlated library plan.

Where the town is small and there is only a single library, then of course there is unity. Situations of this sort are found in many places in Michigan and also in Pennsylvania, with the library usually a part of the school plant. Such a system should be satisfactory for the school children; whether it is equally so for the adult population depends upon the attitude of the school administration and the skill of the librarian.

But the question is perhaps more interesting and more significant in larger cities where school libraries actually exist as separate physical units. Shall these libraries be administered apart from the public library, or shall they be part of a centralized system? It is perhaps worth while to state concretely what is meant by this sort of centralization. Taking Flint as an ex-

ample, it means that all books for the public library and its branches, for the junior and senior high school libraries, and for the junior college library are purchased and cataloged at one central headquarters. Books for the school libraries are recorded in the catalog of the main library when not already in its collection and may be borrowed for adult use when necessary. A common charging system is used at all agencies, and from the beginning the child is registered as a public library borrower and is a member of the whole system. Merely as a matter of statistics, centralization means that all book circulation from all kinds of libraries is assembled and recorded in one place, and a complete statistical picture of the use of all libraries in the city is readily obtainable.

In actual practice, centralization of use, such as that just outlined, plus centralization of administration in the hands of the chief librarian, is commonly, but by no means always, found. Kansas City is the outstanding example of complete unification of all library service. Kalamazoo is an interesting example in a smaller city; here the Board of Education by formal resolution<sup>74</sup> has placed control of all libraries, including particularly the high-school library, in the hands of the librarian. Centralized administration is also found in Lansing, Muskegon, Fort Wayne, Terre Haute, and, with certain exceptions, in Flint. On the other hand, three out of five high-school libraries in Indianapolis are independently administered. Other examples of the same sort are found in Battle Creek, South Bend, and Flint. It is difficult to see any good reason for the continuance of divided authority in library administration unless it is to be found in the desire of school principals to control all the functions carried on in their buildings.

This type of organization, likewise, affords many examples of the location of branch libraries in school buildings. Kansas City, with thirteen branches in schools, is the principal example of adherence to this rule; Indianapolis, with fifteen branches in separate library buildings, is the most marked exception. Other

<sup>74</sup> Kalamazoo, Board of Education, *Official Proceedings*, March 17, 1924.



exceptions are found in Fort Wayne, South Bend, Kalamazoo, and Flint. In Norristown, Pennsylvania, the main library itself is in the high-school building; in Lansing it is on the school grounds; and in Ann Arbor it is an annex to the high-school building.

*Financial questions.*—As already stated, libraries of this type are supported from the funds of the school district. Further, in practically all of the cities here under consideration, the board of education itself has the power to levy the tax for school and library purposes.<sup>75</sup> In eight cities the library is supported by appropriations made by the school board; in five by specific library tax levies. Between these school-connected libraries and the municipal group there seems to be, on the average, little advantage in general financial position. In Michigan the average proportion of local expenditures devoted to public libraries of the district is somewhat greater than in municipal libraries for cities in the 30,000 group; in the other states the advantage is somewhat in favor of the municipal libraries.<sup>76</sup> It must be remembered, however, that the municipal libraries seldom include the cost of maintenance of school libraries, while the school districts usually do. This fact probably swings the balance somewhat against the district libraries.

The libraries of this type supported by special library taxes seem to have one real advantage in times of financial stringency over those supported by appropriations. At least a definite part of the income of the school district is earmarked for the library, and the proceeds of the tax levy may be used by the library to cover the whole of the fiscal year. In the case of the libraries supported by appropriations, the question arises as to whether library service would, or could, be continued if the schools were forced to close because of lack of funds.

The fiscal administration of this library group is very closely united with and subordinate to that of the school system. In

<sup>75</sup> Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>76</sup> Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Financial Statistics of Cities Having a Population of over 30,000*, 1930.



several instances this is carried to the point that the preparation of the library's budget is not left to the librarian, but is made the responsibility of board committees, the district treasurer, or the superintendent. Final approval of the library budget naturally rests always with the board of education, subject in Indiana to further revision by the County Board of Tax Adjustment.

Once the budget is approved, the librarian has a fairly free hand in the actual expenditure of library funds, but he is in most cases subject to a degree of supervision varying with the financial procedure of the board. In Indianapolis all purchases of building supplies are made by the building superintendent of the school system. This officer also has complete charge of the janitorial staff and the supervision of all library buildings. In Kansas City large purchases must be approved by the board of education. In the actual purchasing of supplies there is marked centralization in the hands of the business office of the school district. Among the larger libraries only two report complete independence in purchasing. Most of the purchasing done by the school business departments falls into the category of supplies and equipment. In all but three instances, however, the library still makes its own book purchases. On the whole, difficulties seem to have been fairly well adjusted, though it is apparent that this has not always been easy.

Accounting, also, is highly centralized. In every case the final official accounts of the library are kept by the school accounting officers, but in about half of the cities the library finds it necessary to keep duplicate or "memorandum" accounts of its own. Actual preparation of vouchers and warrants by the school accountants is practically universal, with only one minor exception noted. More often than not, the classification of accounts followed is the standard system for the schools rather than the library form suggested by the American Library Association, for example. This means in one or two cases noted that the library keeps its memorandum records for library purposes, while the school keeps its accounts according to school forms. The situation in these libraries is about the same as that found in any

centralized accounting system: The library saves some time and is spared a certain amount of responsibility in money matters, but the sum total of public money spent on accounts is probably greater than in a decentralized system.

In some of the smaller cities it is apparent that the library budgets and reports of expenditures do not cover all items which might be included. In other words, the library is not a complete fiscal unit; a considerable amount of janitorial and building expense, including heat and light, is often carried on the general school budget and not allocated to the library. Sometimes such allocation would be impossible because of the location of library quarters in the school building. In the larger cities the library practically always pays its own way wholly, except that no rental charge is made for branch quarters in school buildings used by the library. A very complete bookkeeping record of the expenditures of these libraries would probably disclose a considerable amount of hidden library expenditures. Comparisons with independent systems of other types are therefore sometimes misleading.

*Considerations of a general nature.*—The key to both past and future success of the library controlled by the board of education lies in the general attitude of the board itself toward public library service. Perhaps the fundamental distinction here may best be made by contrasting the words "education" and "school." If the board conceives of its work as broadly educational in nature, including in its view the possibilities of adult education on a comprehensive scale, then no doubt public library service will receive due attention. If, on the other hand, the board is only a school board, then it is almost inevitable that the work of the public library will suffer in the long run. Under such circumstances, the library is almost sure to play the rôle of a stepchild. Perhaps of even more importance in this connection is the attitude of the executives of the school system. If they are merely "school men," then the weight of their influence is sure to be in favor of the development of the school library first and of the public library second.

It must be admitted that professional library opinion in published form—and very much more so in unpublished form—is usually unfavorable to the public library managed by the board of education.<sup>77</sup> Even in the best of these libraries one finds little enthusiastic support of the organization either as a matter of theory or as a matter of practice. As we have already noted, state extension agencies, except in Michigan, which has been fairly neutral, have rather positively preferred other forms of library management.

In attempting to determine the fairness of this general library distrust, the discussion may perhaps best be continued by posing several questions, such as: (1) Is the viewpoint of the educational authorities broad enough to include public libraries? (2) Is there sufficient official representation of library interests? (3) Does this system tend to overemphasize school library service as compared with service to the adult public?

A fairly positive answer, based on interviews, correspondence, and study of school reports, may be hazarded to the first of these questions. Little or no evidence of a real philosophy of public education, broad enough to include the library, has been shown by the boards of education in any of the cities here studied. This seems to have been true of the easier days of the past as well as of the depression years. The attention of the board members and school executives alike is so closely focused on the schools that there is as yet no indication of the emergence of a program in which the public library is to play an important part.<sup>78</sup> This statement should not be interpreted to mean that the school boards are entirely uninterested in the public library, but rather that they have failed to demonstrate any thoroughgoing appreciation of library problems and possi-

<sup>77</sup> Cf., e.g., the following: "Detrimental Legislation" (editorial), *Public Libraries*, XVIII (1913), 108-9; editorial on school authorities and libraries, *Library Journal*, XLVI (1921), 460; Wynkoop, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-78.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. National Education Association, Department of Superintendence, *Critical Problems in School Administration, Twelfth Yearbook*, 1934, pp. 25-26. Here the superintendents discuss the question of continuing education but fail to mention public libraries.

bilities. The librarian himself has carried the full load in the advancement of libraries in these cities.

Of course the corollary here is that our second question must also be answered in the negative. As compared with all types of libraries governed by separate boards, there is a decided lack of public representation for the library. This is apparent to a greater or less degree in many cities. Again the brunt of this task falls upon the librarian, and not the least of his responsibilities is that of continually preaching the library gospel before the board of education.

The third question cannot be answered in any such categorical manner. Does overemphasis on school library service mean underemphasis on work with the adult public? Certainly it would be foolish to say that any of these libraries are devoting too much attention to the needs of children and young people in the schools in any absolute sense. On the other hand, it is safe to assert that in several instances the school interest does very noticeably predominate in a relative sense. In these cities the adult reader does not receive as much consideration as he would in most municipal libraries. The question here raised affords the real test of the general success of this type of library government. Some boards of education are meeting their responsibilities fully; others quite evidently are not.

#### CONCLUSION

In the foregoing analysis of the governmental organization of the school-district public library, an attempt has been made to present fairly the facts as they exist today. On the face of the record, we may conclude that the mixture of schools and libraries as a single governmental service has not been as successful as might have been hoped or expected. As is so often true in library governmental organization, expediency has been the determining factor in the adoption of the type rather than any broadly considered program or plan. For this reason too much significance should not be attached to the relation of the library to the school district as a matter of political philosophy. The



example of the very important Ohio group of school-district libraries is highly pertinent in this connection. These libraries, as shown by the detailed description earlier in the chapter, are a part of the school district in only a rather nominal sense. Essentially they are independent institutions charged with the responsibility of carrying out a single and separate public activity.

From the point of view of library service to the general public, the best results seem to have been attained when the mixture of schools and libraries is least complete; that is to say, when the library, though remaining legally a part of the school district, is most nearly independent through administration by its own board. Of the two subtypes of school-district library—that in which the library is managed by a separate board of trustees and that in which it is controlled directly by the board of education—the first is probably more favorable to the development of adequate library service to the adult public.

This general situation is apparently due to the fact that the school and the public library have not yet fused as a single system of public education. Whether this fusion can or should be made is still an open question. In relative importance in the public eye and as governmental functions the two activities are highly unequal, with the inevitable result that the smaller service is fearful of domination by the larger, and the larger is only too likely to overlook the smaller. The leadership of both institutions, also, is intensive and self-centered in a high degree and largely absorbed in its own problems. All of this is perhaps unfortunate, but none the less true.

Nevertheless, certain advantages seem inherent in the governmental connection between the library and the school system, and these must be recapitulated briefly. The fact that there are wide differences between these advantages in theory and their realization in practice should not result in failure to consider them fairly.

First among the advantages should be stressed the patent fact that the governmental connection of schools and libraries unites two institutions which are interested in a common objective—



education. In this type of organization the library is very definitely placed among the educational activities of government—a classification very generally upheld both by the courts<sup>79</sup> and by students of government,<sup>80</sup> as we have seen. Perhaps the principal difficulty in this combination lies in the fact that the schools are educational in a narrow sense, while “education” in the case of the library is a much broader term, including a somewhat diffused group of objectives—education, information, and recreation. One institution has achieved its results by a formal program, the other by one which has emphasized informality. In any event, however, the library as a part of the educational organization is strategically located with respect to playing a part in any expanded program for adult education which may be developed.

In the second place, the school-district public library is fortunately situated with regard to closer and better co-ordination of public and school library service. At least the two kinds of libraries are part of the same subdivision of government, not separated as in the case of municipal libraries and school libraries. While the potential advantages of this position have not always been realized, the possibilities for unitary administration of both types of libraries are important and should be exploited.

Finally, it may be suggested that the school connection should strengthen the professional position of library personnel. For one thing, the dangers of political interference are apparently rather successfully avoided. Moreover, the status of the professional librarian might easily be made comparable to that of the teacher, with the accompanying advantages of certification, salary grading, promotion, and retirement allowances. As yet this advantage is still largely theoretical, and little actual progress has been made in this direction.

The disadvantages of the school-connected library are most obvious in the case of the library managed directly by the board of education. In that type of organization the library sorely

<sup>79</sup> See pp. 44-45.

<sup>80</sup> See p. III.

lacks representation before the public and the interest and support of a citizen board. Likewise, public library service is in real danger of subordination to school interests and methods. This is particularly true when the superintendent of schools is the administrative superior of the librarian. In general, there is room for much improvement in the attitude of boards of education toward public library service when it is placed under their direction.

If the conclusions here presented are not particularly encouraging, it should be recalled that the whole scene might be radically changed by the adoption of a different point of view toward adult education on the part of school boards. The necessity for the adoption of an extensive national program in this field seems manifest. If the public school system, or the public library, or schools and libraries together, accept the responsibility for the development of such a program, then it may well be that the libraries of this group will find themselves in an advantageous position.

## CHAPTER V

### MUNICIPAL LIBRARIES WITHOUT BOARDS<sup>1</sup>

THE fact that no more than thirteen libraries in cities with a population of over 30,000 require consideration in this chapter is in itself sufficient testimony to the traditional non-conformity of the public library in its governmental relations. Movement after movement for the reform and improvement of municipal government has swept the country, but the march of progress has left the library little changed. If it is too much to say that library leaders have actively resisted change in the structure of government as it affects the library, it is, on the contrary, too little to say that they have been suspicious and distrustful of new forms. Actually, they have fought to retain the old forms and have been fearful of experiment. That the pattern which they have most often wished to retain has not been suited to the newer fashions has concerned them very little.

At this point, opportunity must again be taken to emphasize the fact that there is no required correspondence between the form of municipal government and the form of library government. Theoretically, the library managed by a single executive without a board may be found under any of the three forms of municipal government—mayor-council, commission, or manager—but it is naturally more likely to be present in the newer commission and manager forms than in the older mayor-council type. However, the fact remains that out of the eighty-one commission cities in the United States with a population of over 30,000, only six have abolished the library board, and in the sixty-nine manager cities the same number of libraries are now without boards. And among the one hundred and sixty

<sup>1</sup> Much of the information in this chapter is derived from correspondence, questionnaires, and personal visits.

mayor-council cities,<sup>2</sup> only a single example of the library without a board is to be found. The rather typical advance from mayor-council to commission to manager type which has taken place in numerous cities may have changed library status somewhat, but usually only slightly.

#### DEFINITION AND CLASSIFICATION OF TYPES

The distinguishing characteristics of all the libraries now to be considered are two. In the first place, the management of the

TABLE VII  
MUNICIPAL LIBRARIES WITHOUT BOARDS IN CITIES OF  
OVER 30,000 POPULATION

| Library Directly under Council | Libraries under City Commissions                                                                                  | Libraries under City Managers*                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pittsburgh (North Side), Pa.   | Bayonne, N.J.<br>Hoboken, N.J.<br>Perth Amboy, N.J.<br>St. Paul, Minn.<br>Union City, N.J.<br>West New York, N.J. | Jackson, Mich.<br>Long Beach, Calif.<br>Pontiac, Mich.<br>Sacramento, Calif.<br>St. Petersburg, Fla.<br>Stockton, Calif. |

\* The following cities have library boards appointed by the city manager: Fall River, Mass.; Oklahoma City, Okla.; Rochester, N.Y.; San Diego, Calif.; San Jose, Calif.

library is placed in the hands of a single responsible executive, the librarian, who takes his regular place in the administrative hierarchy. Here, it may be said, he stands squarely on his own feet. Responsibility for the administration of the library is definitely his, although the responsibility for its support and general success must necessarily be shared to a large extent by his administrative and legislative superiors. In the second place, the library has become in a very strict sense a "department" or "bureau" in the city government. It takes its place alongside every other department and is administered according to the same general plan.

It will be most convenient to arrange the cities to be studied

<sup>2</sup> Data as to number of cities in each type from *Municipal Year Book*, 1934, p. 101.

in this chapter in three groups, as already suggested, according to the form of city government—mayor-council, commission, and manager. Only libraries entirely without administrative boards are included for consideration. Some of these libraries have purely advisory boards, but none of these have specific powers of management over the libraries. The cities of 30,000 or more population which fall in this general class may be subdivided as shown in Table VII.

#### LIBRARIES UNDER DIRECT CONTROL OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Only one example, among the cities of 30,000 or over, has been found of a public library which is administered under the direct authority of the city council, and this library does not serve a whole city. The case in point is that of the Carnegie Library, North Side, Pittsburgh. When the former separate city of Allegheny became a part of the city of Pittsburgh, its public library was not amalgamated with the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh but remained a separate organization in all respects. Among the smaller cities no examples of the sort have been discovered, although it is possible that they exist. Pasadena, California, is almost in this class. There the city council (Board of Directors) appoints the librarian directly, but a few powers of management of the library are vested in a library board. The Price Free Library, Macon, Georgia, is also very nearly in this class; it has a board composed entirely of aldermen. In passing it may be noted as significant that none of the cities of the "strong-mayor" type has resorted to this form of organization.

But reflection suggests that two important groups of libraries, under the jurisdiction of governmental units other than cities, are organized in an analogous manner, although with important distinctions. One of these groups is that of libraries administered directly by boards of education, already discussed in the preceding chapter. While there is no difference in form between the two methods, it may be pointed out that the board of educa-



tion is responsible for only one governmental function, and that library service is very closely related to that single activity. Even more similar is the case of the California county libraries, in which there is no library board and the librarian is directly responsible to the Board of Supervisors of the county. In these libraries, however, the supervisors are limited in their appointment of a librarian to persons holding county librarians' certificates, which may only be obtained after a rigid examination by a Board of County Library Examiners.<sup>3</sup> The law further requires that all staff appointments must be made on recommendation of the librarian. These provisions at once lift appointments and management of the library out of the realm of ordinary politics. In fairness to the California type, it must be stated that it has worked well and is heartily indorsed by many librarians in that state.

The Pittsburgh case, isolated as it is, need not detain us long. A council Committee on Parks and Libraries, with three members constituting a Subcommittee on Allegheny Library, has general direction over the affairs of that library.<sup>4</sup> The librarian addresses his report to the Council on behalf of the Committee. Funds for the maintenance of the library are provided by a segregated appropriation made by the Council.

In considering the administration of this library, comparison with its larger neighbor, the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, is unavoidable. For example, appointments in recent years to the headship of these two libraries have been in marked contrast. The Trustees of the Carnegie Library, following a tradition of long standing, made the selection of a director a matter of nation-wide search, while the Council, in appointing a librarian for the Allegheny Library, was perfectly content to follow political channels.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> California County Library Law, *General Laws of California*, 1931 (Deering), Act 2750, I, 1257-66.

<sup>4</sup> Carnegie Free Library of Allegheny (Pittsburgh, North Side), *Annual Report*, 1932, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> "Ward Politics Graduate Now Heads Library," *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, January 7, 1930.

It is unlikely that this particular type of library control will ever be important. Under the weak-mayor form of municipal government the library board is almost certain to be continued. Under the strong-mayor plan there might be some likelihood of its use, although this is not in line with actual experience.

#### LIBRARIES UNDER CITY COMMISSIONS

The essential features of the commission form of municipal government may be simply stated. The city is governed by an elected commission, commonly of five members, one of them the mayor, who are both legislative and administrative officers. As a legislative body they determine general policies and pass necessary ordinances and resolutions for the government of the city. As administrators the commissioners are each assigned to the management of a department or group of departments of the city government, over which they exercise general control. Under each commissioner are usually the technical heads of various municipal services in the group assigned to him. The very nature of the plan seems to imply that each commissioner will be left pretty much alone in his own sphere, and herein lies its principal weakness. An elected commissioner, assigned to manage a group of municipal activities, is by no means always well qualified for his task; indeed, many such assignments are manifestly unsuitable. However, as long as the commissioner leaves the actual conduct of the departments under his control to his technical subordinates, no great harm need be done.

The public library may be made a part of this sort of organization in one of two ways. If, as has nearly always been the case, the library board is retained, the situation is not essentially different from that in which a library board operates under the mayor-council plan. The library board may be more or less definitely under the general supervision of a particular commissioner, but the board is nevertheless responsible for the administration and policy of the library.<sup>6</sup>

At this point, however, we are concerned with the half-dozen

<sup>6</sup> See pp. 26-27.

instances in which the library board has been abolished and the library has been placed under the general control of the commission and the specific control of a single commissioner. The five New Jersey cities in this group are organized under the commission-government law of that state (the Walsh Act), originally passed in 1911;<sup>7</sup> the sixth city, St. Paul, is governed by a home-rule charter providing a very thoroughgoing form of commission government.<sup>8</sup> First, the New Jersey cities will be considered as a group, and then consideration will be given to St. Paul, the outstanding example of this class.

*New Jersey group.*—Commission government has been very popular in New Jersey, which has fifteen commission cities in the 30,000-or-over population group—more than any other state.<sup>9</sup> The law under which these cities are governed permits any city to create or abolish "subordinate boards."<sup>10</sup> By virtue of this general power, existing library boards, originally established under the general state library act, have been discontinued in five of the fifteen cities, and the libraries in these cities have come directly under the control of the commissions.

The law further divides the functions of the city governments in the larger cities into five departments, as follows: Public Affairs, Revenue and Finance, Public Safety, Streets and Public Improvements, and Parks and Public Property. In four of the five cities here studied, the library is under the direction of the commissioner of public affairs, usually the mayor. In the fifth instance, the library is assigned to the commissioner of parks. As a rule, the commissioner in whose charge the library is placed devotes little time to its affairs and is primarily concerned, as might be imagined, with matters of business and with

<sup>7</sup> New Jersey, *Cumulative Supplement to Compiled Statutes, 1911-24*, sec. \*\*139, II, 2450-511; see also L. T. Stevens, *New Jersey Commission Government Law (Walsh Act) and Municipal Manager Law* (5th ed.; Cape May, N.J., 1924).

<sup>8</sup> St. Paul (Minn.), *Charter of the City of St. Paul*, 1930. Originally in effect in 1914.

<sup>9</sup> *Municipal Year Book*, 1934, pp. 107-12.

<sup>10</sup> Act cited in n. 7. Provision sustained by decision in *Schmeidler v. Atlantic City*, 102 N.J. 121 (1926).

staff appointments. There is no evidence of any real interest or leadership on the part of the commissioners. It necessarily follows that the policy of the library is largely determined by the librarian. Rules and regulations for the management of the library are either carried over from rules framed by the former library boards or are made by the librarian, sometimes in consultation with higher authority.

Appointment of the librarian and staff is usually in the hands of the commissioner in charge of library affairs, although in one case decisions in such matters are apparently made by the commission as a body. Salaries are generally fixed by the whole commission.

It so happens that four of these New Jersey libraries are located in Hudson County, well known for its active mixture of politics and government. Regardless of the type of library control, politics might have made its mark on the library. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, to find several instances of political pressure of a very positive sort among these libraries—this in spite of the fact that the chief librarians have consistently stood out for the best professional traditions in the management of their libraries.<sup>11</sup>

In their financial administration, the commission-governed libraries are almost wholly absorbed in the municipal system. The budget is prepared by the librarian and submitted to the commission for approval and revision. Vouchers, except in one instance, are prepared by the city finance officers, and checks against the library fund, which is held in the city treasury, are drawn by the city accountants. Formal accounting is done by the city finance department, although the library keeps accounts of one sort or another in at least three instances. The one important exception to the fiscal dependence of the library is that four out of five libraries do their own purchasing of all sorts independently of the city.

Three of the libraries are supported by a mill tax for library purposes levied by the commission in accordance with the pro-

<sup>11</sup> Details can easily be cited.



visions of the state library law; the others receive an appropriation rather than the proceeds of a special tax levy. The proportion of total municipal income devoted to the library in these five cities in 1930 was 1.4 per cent—exactly the same as the national average for all libraries.<sup>12</sup> From this it would appear that the commissions were reasonably liberal in their allotments to the libraries. However, comparisons of the library ratio before and after the introduction of commission government tell a rather different story. In one city the library proportion has fallen greatly; in another it has dropped steadily since commission government became operative; in a third the average ratio has been consistently lower. Only in one instance has there been a slight increase.<sup>13</sup> The fifth city has been under commission government for too brief a period to make comparisons possible. Quite definitely, the libraries as a group have relatively lost ground under commission government.

*St. Paul.*—The city of St. Paul is an outstanding example of the complete application of the commission form of government to all functions of government within the city. Under the home-rule charter which became effective in 1914,<sup>14</sup> the library board, and even the school board, were abolished, and these activities were entirely departmentalized. St. Paul, it should be added, is the only large city in the country which does not have a board of education.

The governing body of the city consists of the mayor and six commissioners, who constitute the Council. Each of the commissioners is in charge of one of the six major divisions of the city government; these are public safety, public works, parks and playgrounds, public utilities, finance, and education. The commissioner of education is in charge of all the educational interests of the city and has under his immediate direction three services: schools, library, and the municipal auditorium. Each of these is managed by a chief who is appointed by the commissioner, subject to the approval of the whole Council.

<sup>12</sup> Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Financial Statistics of Cities Having a Population of over 30,000*, 1930.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 1911-30.

<sup>14</sup> *Charter of the City of St. Paul*, 1930, secs. 400-412.



The charter further provides that the librarian shall be a university graduate and shall be "familiar with library administration and practice." Members of the staff, other than the librarian, are appointed by the commissioner of education, under civil service rules. Salaries are fixed by the Council by ordinance on recommendation of the commissioner.

The whole organization, therefore, is a perfect picture of commission government. The commissioner of education combines in his office the functions ordinarily performed by the school board and the library board. He is assigned to his particular post by action of his fellow-commissioners and may or may not be qualified for the place. As might be expected, his own interest in the library is largely confined to questions of business and personnel. Although the charter provides that rules and regulations shall be framed by the commissioner and approved by the Council, in practice these matters are largely in the hands of the librarian.

The financial administration of the library, under this plan, conforms very closely to that of the city in general. The library is supported by an appropriation made by the Council, and its budget is passed upon by the commissioner of education and the comptroller. The procedure for payment of bills is largely centralized in the hands of the city accounting officers, but both library and comptroller find it necessary to keep accounts. Purchases over \$100 in amount are made through the city purchasing department; this exemption is sufficient to care for most of the library's special book orders.

The position of the St. Paul Public Library under this particular type of organization has been favored by several fortunate circumstances. At the beginning of the commission period, the library was under the charge of a librarian of national reputation, who had been appointed by the old library board; and he was retained in his position. Some difficulties due to changes in policy were experienced at first because of frequent new commissioners in charge of the library, but in recent years a single commissioner of education has held office for several terms, and reasonable continuity of administration has been

possible. The position of the library staff has probably been protected by the civil service provisions of the charter.

Even more significant has been the part played by the Library Advisory Board. This body is appointed by the commissioner of education and is composed of twelve citizen members, one from each ward, a teacher elected by the general body of school-teachers, the superintendent of schools, and four high-school principals. There is little doubt that this body has been of real value to the library. It argues boldly for library appropriations and rather effectively represents the library before the public. The librarian has relied greatly on its assistance. It is evident that this Advisory Board has to a large extent in practice filled the place of a full-fledged library board.

In conclusion, it may be said that neither the type of municipal government found in St. Paul nor the form of school control meets the approval of many specialists in those respective fields. The opinion of municipal experts ordinarily favors manager government as opposed to commission government,<sup>15</sup> and school opinion is definitely opposed to the abolition of the school board.<sup>16</sup> So far as the public library is concerned, the results may be characterized as neutral rather than as positive or negative. On the whole, it seems quite unlikely that the St. Paul type of municipal government will be widely copied.

All but one of these libraries obviously lack any official machinery for the representation of the library before the public, other than that which may be offered by the librarian himself. About the most that can be expected from the commissioner in charge of the library is a measure of indifference or non-interference rather than active support. The librarian is seldom a really free agent; as compared with that of his colleagues in other commission cities which have retained the library board, his position is unenviable.

<sup>15</sup> Herbert Lefkowitz, "The City Manager Movement in St. Paul," *National Municipal Review*, XIX (1930), 587-90.

<sup>16</sup> St. Paul Survey Commission, *Report of a Survey of the School System of St. Paul* (St. Paul, 1917), p. 7.

The facts presented concerning this group of libraries speak sufficiently plainly for themselves. Commission government, judged with all fairness, seems to have contributed almost literally nothing to the advancement of efficient or successful library service in those cities where the commission has assumed entire control over the public library. As in the case of libraries under council control, it seems unlikely that this particular form will increase to any extent. As a type, commission government itself is on the wane, and it is reasonable to suppose that its importance with respect to libraries will also decline.

#### LIBRARIES UNDER DIRECT CONTROL OF THE CITY MANAGER<sup>17</sup>

Turning now to the position of the library in the "council-manager"<sup>18</sup> plan of city government, it should be recognized, first of all, that here is no moribund or fading type of municipal government, but rather one which at the present time commands the widest interest and respect. It is the favored plan of the National Municipal League and finds much support among university faculties of political science, governmental research bureaus, and numerous civic organizations of all kinds. In the mind of the average citizen the idea of good local government is almost certain in these days to connote the manager plan. Beginning with the first example in the United States in 1908, the plan was, in 1934, in force in 418 cities in the country. Among the cities with a population of over 30,000, 69, or 22 per cent, have adopted the manager plan. About one-fifth of all cities of over 10,000 population are under this form of government, but among the smaller towns and cities the proportion is much lower.<sup>19</sup>

In council-manager government, the council retains only its

<sup>17</sup> For a somewhat fuller treatment of this subject see C. B. Joeckel, "The Public Library under the City-Manager Form of Government," *Library Quarterly*, I (1931), 121-51, 301-37.

<sup>18</sup> The designation "council-manager" plan is preferred by the International City Managers' Association.

<sup>19</sup> *Municipal Year Book*, 1934, pp. 93, 101.

legislative, or policy-forming functions, and transfers all administrative duties to the manager, who thus becomes the executive head of the city government. The official definition is as follows: "The phrase 'council-manager government' means that form of government in which the people choose a legislative body which in turn appoints the city manager, who has control over administrative matters."<sup>20</sup>

*Extent of effect of manager plan on libraries.*—The place of the public library in this increasingly important method of local government is naturally a matter of great moment. The most surprising thing about it is the relatively minor effect the progress of the manager plan has had on the formal governmental status of libraries. As we have already seen, among the sixty-nine manager cities of over 30,000 population are found only six libraries administered by a single executive under the control of the manager. Reference should also be made, however, to the additional group of five libraries in cities of this size which are managed by boards appointed by the manager. Among the cities under 30,000 in population there are a small number of examples of libraries directly controlled by the city manager, including Petersburg, Virginia; Asbury Park, New Jersey; Albert Lea, Minnesota; Lakeland, Florida; and other places.

The preceding statement, however, by no means tells the whole story. Regardless of whether the library board is retained in a manager city or not, the advent of a powerful executive, as the manager usually is, has made a real difference to the library, even though it may have been accomplished indirectly rather than by specified legal control. Some attempt will be made to suggest the nature of such control in the chapters devoted to the government of municipal libraries under separate boards. Meanwhile, it is our purpose here to consider in detail only the small group of six cities in which the libraries are under the direct authority of the manager.

The slowness with which libraries have been added to this

<sup>20</sup> *City Manager Yearbook*, 1932, p. 243. See also C. E. Ridley and O. F. Nolting, *The City-Manager Profession* (Chicago, 1934), pp. 13, 15.



group may be emphasized by listing in chronological order the names of these six cities and the dates at which the manager plan became effective in each: Jackson, Michigan, 1915; Pontiac, Michigan, 1920; Long Beach and Sacramento, California, 1921; Stockton, California, 1923; St. Petersburg, Florida, 1931. The largest city in the group is Long Beach, with a population of 142,032 in 1930. The reasons for the slow and limited effect of the manager plan on libraries have already been mentioned at various points but may be summarized here for convenience. Libraries under educational authorities are necessarily outside the possible control of the manager. The same is true of libraries of the corporation and association type and also of county libraries. These groups alone account for a third of the manager cities of over 30,000 population. But among the municipal libraries which might come under manager control, the principal reason has been the desire of library authorities, backed by a complex system of general and special laws and a strong tradition, to retain the power of library management in the hands of the library board.

In all of the six cities the change in library status has been brought about by the adoption of new charters, not by general legislation. Two of the cities, Long Beach and Sacramento, changed from commission management of the library, of the type described in the preceding section, to manager control; Jackson, Stockton, and St. Petersburg abolished separate library boards; and Pontiac, under its general charter powers, took over an old association-type library and made it a city department.

It is also important to note that in all the cities to be considered the manager plan was adopted as a measure of improvement or reform of the existing local government. Concrete evidence of this desire to provide for efficient government as applied to the library is supplied in the charters of the three California cities in this group. All of these contain some provisions regarding qualifications of the library staff. Long Beach specifies that the librarian must be a graduate of an accredited library



school, or else certified or approved by the state board of library examiners.<sup>21</sup> Stockton requires that the librarian must be "technically trained" and that staff members, except apprentices, must have had "previous experience in library work," or in lieu thereof certificates from approved institutions or library certificates issued by the state;<sup>22</sup> and Sacramento has very similar provisions.<sup>23</sup> Requirements such as these are sufficient evidence of the desire of the framers of the charter to insure competent library service.

*Characteristics of libraries under manager control.*—The outstanding feature of the manager plan is that final administrative authority is concentrated in the hands of a single executive, the city manager, and that power and responsibility pass directly from him to subordinate departments and officials. Diagrammatically this may be represented by a straight line drawn from council to manager to department head to department staff.<sup>24</sup> In the six cities now under examination, the public library is no exception to this general scheme. The librarian, as head of the library department, is directly responsible to the manager and submits his annual report to that officer.

The librarian is appointed by the manager, although council confirmation is required in three cities. The principle of administrative responsibility is carried still farther by conferring on the librarian authority for making staff appointments in two instances. In the other cities, the librarian may recommend candidates for appointment to the staff, but final authority rests with the manager. Only in Long Beach are staff members appointed under civil service rules, and there the librarian and assistant librarian are exempted. Salaries are fixed by the manager or by the council on his recommendation.

The natural result of a straight-line organization of this type is that the power and responsibilities of the librarian are, under

<sup>21</sup> Long Beach, *Charter*, 1927, sec. 197.

<sup>22</sup> Stockton, *Charter*, 1922, art. xviii, sec. 3.

<sup>23</sup> Sacramento, *Charter*, 1921, art. xv, sec. 131.

<sup>24</sup> Ridley and Nolting, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

normal conditions, rather extensive. His independence is likely to be greater than that of a librarian who feels obligated to refer decisions to a board for approval. Further, such decisions may be made promptly and directly after conference, if necessary, with the manager. In the absence of a board, the framing of rules and regulations ordinarily devolves upon the librarian; he also is the final authority in book selection; and in general he is largely responsible for the whole policy of the library. Such at least is the theory. When actual practice varies from the theory, it is usually because the manager plan is not really functioning properly at the moment.

The complete operation of the manager plan implies further that the library will be treated, in its financial support and in administration, in exactly the same manner as any other city department. Gone are most of the special privileges generally accorded the library in this connection in other forms of government, and only a few remnants of fiscal independence are yet to be found.

Most noteworthy in this connection, perhaps, is the absence of a special library tax in all the cities except Long Beach. In that city a separate library tax, not specified in amount, but over and above the general municipal limit, is levied by the city council. In all other cities the library is supported by an appropriation made by the council. In every case the budget is prepared by the librarian, submitted to the manager for revision, and finally approved by the council.

Purchasing is largely centralized in the hands of the city purchasing agent, or other similar authority, although a few exemptions in the case of the library may still be noted. In Long Beach the charter itself makes an exception to centralized purchasing for "books, periodicals, and special library equipment."<sup>25</sup> Sacramento also still orders books directly. In general it appears that this difficult problem of purchasing has in part, at least, been solved by common-sense adjustments between librarians and city officers, with the librarians specifying the

<sup>25</sup> Long Beach, *Charter*, 1927, sec. 202.

source of purchases in one or two instances. Accounting and bookkeeping, likewise, are generally centralized. Vouchers usually, and warrants always, are prepared by the city accounting officers, and payments of library bills are approved by these officers. Accounts are kept by the city finance department, and the classification of expenditures is that used by the municipality for all departments. In one case it is reported that the library also keeps accounts, and this is probably true in part, at least, of some other libraries.

*Summary on manager control of library.*—The type of library government in which the library is placed under the direct authority of the city manager and is administered by a single executive is worthy of serious consideration. In spite of the slow progress it has made as a form up to the present time, it is likely to develop further, although prediction as to the extent of its growth would be rash. It is without doubt the most serious rival of the standard type of municipal library under board control and represents the greatest break with traditional forms.

Inevitably, therefore, sharp differences of opinion will arise in the consideration of the position of the library in this type of city government. The advocates of the city-manager plan cannot understand why library authorities are unwilling to cast their lot in with a plan for the reform of municipal government as a whole, boldly risking present advantages for the sake of a better order in the future. They base their argument on the merits and efficiency of the manager plan as a whole. Even though the form, as such, is perhaps not especially attractive to library interests, they assert, it will be best to forego the advantages of separation and variation in type of control for the sake of making the entire municipal structure as uniform and efficient as possible.

The library group, on the other hand, concentrates its attention on the library aspects of the situation and is perhaps too ready to point to particular examples in which the results of the new form have not been so satisfactory to the library. While complete reconciliation of these divergent opinions is difficult,

both groups should attempt to understand the attitude of the other. In one point, at least, they are wholly agreed: Both are sincerely concerned, as observers or participants, in the cause of good government. If an attitude of mutual fairness can be maintained, the viewpoints of the two groups should ultimately be brought closer together.

To attempt a final judgment of the type of library management now under consideration based on the half-dozen examples found in cities of 30,000 population, plus a few additional examples in smaller cities, would be unwise and unfair to the manager movement as a whole. In at least two of the six cities the manager plan has not really operated effectively. However, these are the available examples, and it is impossible for them to escape scrutiny in this connection. In five of the cities, moreover, manager government has been in effect for periods of from eleven to nineteen years. Without attaching too much weight to the fact, it must be stated for the record that in four out of five of these cities the ratio of library expenditures to total municipal expenditures has declined during the manager period up to 1930, although as a group the libraries of the country have maintained their relative position during the same period. In the fifth city, manager government must be given credit for beginning library service as a public function, although it has not been well supported.<sup>26</sup> It must likewise be recorded that the tenure of the librarians in these cities has been relatively insecure when compared with libraries in general.

In a more general view of the situation it is important to emphasize the significant changes which this form of library government has brought about in certain directions generally considered of great importance by library authorities.

In the first place, the library has lost its separate board of

<sup>26</sup> In tabular form the facts are: Proportion of library expenditures to total municipal expenditures in 1930—Long Beach, 2.0 per cent (2.5 per cent in 1921); Sacramento, 0.9 per cent (1.9 per cent in 1919); Stockton, 1.5 per cent (1.6 per cent in 1922); Jackson, 1.4 per cent (2.6 per cent in 1915); Pontiac, 0.7 per cent (0 per cent in 1919). County expenditures deducted from Stockton figures. Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *op. cit.*



management and along with it a varying degree of independence. With the board has gone the possibility of official citizen representation of the library before the people of the city. This lack of a board has been definitely felt in the cities used here as examples, and in at least three instances advisory boards have been appointed. Long Beach, at the time of the 1933 earthquake, lacking a library board, which in that crisis "would have been invaluable," appointed a citizens' Library Rehabilitation Committee.<sup>27</sup>

Second, without the library board, responsibility for the continuity and uniformity in library policy rests largely on the manager and the librarian. If the manager can be assured of a reasonably long term of office, perhaps little difficulty will be encountered in this respect, but this has unfortunately not always been the case.<sup>28</sup> If the librarian must, relatively often, deal with a new superior, a stable and uniform policy will be less easily maintained.

In the actual routine of library administration this single-executive type of organization should permit smoothness and promptness in library management. Since all functions of the city government are controlled by a single administrator, correlation and co-operation between departments should be easy and mutually helpful. The greatest difficulty at this point is found in securing the interest of the manager himself in the development of library service. Frankly, will the manager actively concern himself with the distinctly "human" problems involved in library administration? Evidence on this point is as yet not conclusive.<sup>29</sup>

As a last point in this summary of changes caused by manager control of libraries must be mentioned the method of financial support of the library. In this type of government in its proper

<sup>27</sup> Theodora R. Brewitt, "Surviving an Earthquake," *Pacific Bindery Talk*, VI (1933), 11-13.

<sup>28</sup> Particularly true of the five cities here in question. See *Municipal Year Book*, 1934, pp. 196, 198-99.

<sup>29</sup> L. D. White, *The City Manager* (Chicago, 1927), pp. 128-49.



form there is no such thing as a separate tax for a particular function; every activity stands on its own feet. It must compete on equal terms with all the others and must demonstrate its value and its necessity at every point. The library, of course, is no exception to the general rule.

At every point in the foregoing list the manager appears to be the key to the situation. Responsibility for the welfare of the library rests heavily on his shoulders in all cities in which the library is now administratively under his direction, and in all future additions to the list of these cities. If he really cares to improve conditions, it will not be difficult for him to find ways and means of doing so. Strictly from the library point of view, the two weak spots in the armor of the city manager are the uncertainty about his real interest in the library and the further uncertainty concerning his willingness to recommend adequate budgets for its maintenance. If the attitude of the manager with respect to these two points is satisfactory, the librarian is not likely to ask for more. As a practical matter, a few outstanding examples of library-minded city managers who have the welfare of library service at heart and see to it that it is well supported will do more to persuade librarians and trustees of the possibilities of this form of library government than many pages of written argument.

## CHAPTER VI

### MUNICIPAL LIBRARIES MANAGED BY BOARDS: ORGANIZATION OF THE LIBRARY BOARD<sup>1</sup>

THE common conception of the organization of the American public library, held by the ordinary citizen and the specialist in government alike, revolves about an institution attached to the municipality and managed by a special board. So widespread is this general view that explanation is always necessary whenever a library is not of this type. The phrase "library board" has become a generic term somewhat similar in the extent of its popular usage to that of "school board." Once a phrase of this sort, with the ideas it connotes, has been imbedded in the popular mind, it tends to become a potent force in the perpetuation both of the structural form and of the administrative practices of the library. This naturally results in the creation of a picture of apparent uniformity, although in point of fact there is the greatest possible variation, both in matters of detail and also in the actual authority of the library board as an administrative agency.

It thus becomes a matter of considerable importance merely to present accurately and in some detail the essential facts about library boards and their functions. The present chapter will be devoted to a description of the membership and term of office of municipal library boards as they are found in the United States today. These facts are matters of detail, but they are by no means unimportant. In the succeeding chapter, attention will be directed to the powers and duties of library boards, with particular reference to the degree of the library's independence of the municipal corporation which it serves; this will result in a

<sup>1</sup> When authority is not otherwise cited, information was obtained from questionnaires or from visits to libraries.

rough classification of different groups of libraries based on their actual administrative powers. A third and final chapter will be concerned with an effort to evaluate in precise terms the board system of management as it has developed in the government of public libraries.

A further definition of purpose must also be made at the outset. In these chapters we shall be concerned primarily with libraries which are, as has been said, "attached" to the units of local government and managed by boards. This means, first of all, city libraries, and most of our attention will be devoted to this group; but it must not be forgotten that libraries are also controlled by boroughs, towns, townships, villages, and even by "taxing districts." Consideration of libraries which are a part of the county government will be reserved for a later chapter dealing with larger units of library service. Further, it must be recognized that any general discussion of the nature of library boards will apply in large measure to all libraries administered by boards, including some of the school-district libraries and all of the corporation and association libraries discussed in previous chapters.

#### DEFINITION AND NAME

The municipal public library of the type now to be considered may be nothing more or less than a department of the municipal government administered under the direction of a board. Or it may be related to the local government in some other way—for example, through the appointment of its board or through its establishment by authority of the local government. There is always some definite legal connection between the library and the municipality, although the difference between some of the libraries classified here and some of the corporate libraries is very slight indeed.

The governing body which has more or less complete authority over the library will be designated by the general term "library board," regardless of its official name. It may be defined as a municipal board made up of a group of persons who are jointly

responsible for the administration of public library service in the city or other unit served.<sup>2</sup>

The exact name applied to this body is not a matter of great significance. The common unofficial designation in general use is almost always "board," and the members are usually referred to as "trustees," whatever their official title may be. In addition to board, the official designation of "library commission" is used rather frequently,<sup>3</sup> while "committee" is found in a few instances. The members of the board are either trustees, directors, commissioners, managers, or agents. As between "board" and "commission," the former title seems to be somewhat preferable in that it implies the collective action of the group. A commission, on the other hand, may sometimes act as individuals and is often charged with duties connected with the enforcement of a regulatory statute.<sup>4</sup> The use of the term "trustee" dates back to the organization of the Boston Public Library<sup>5</sup> and to the predecessors of the free public library.<sup>6</sup> It is used in such official titles as the Trustees' Section of the American Library Association and in many state library associations as well. Although "director,"<sup>7</sup> following the corporation analogy, is perhaps equally defensible as a designation, the use of the title "trustee" seems to express very satisfactorily the idea of the office held by incumbents, librarians, and general public alike.

The history of the development of the board system of administration in libraries has already been briefly sketched in chapter i. Here we need only remark in passing that it is only one aspect of the very common American practice of imposing

<sup>2</sup> Paraphrasing William Anderson, *American City Government* (New York, 1925), p. 444.

<sup>3</sup> Examples are found in Detroit, Saginaw, and other places.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. John Dickinson, "Commissions," *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (New York, 1931), IV, 36-40; W. F. Willoughby, *Principles of Public Administration* (Baltimore, 1927), pp. 134-35.

<sup>5</sup> H. G. Wadlin, *Public Library of the City of Boston* (Boston, 1911), pp. 30-31.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., the members of the board of the Boston Library Society were designated "trustees" (Massachusetts, *Private and Special Statutes*, 1780-1805, I, 526-27).

<sup>7</sup> The title "director" is also frequently applied to the executive head of a library.

amateur supervision and control over the professional expert in the administration of his department.<sup>8</sup> It may also be noted that the single amateur department head, often found in larger cities in police and other departments, has never been a factor in library administration, which has always employed either an amateur board with a professional executive or else the professional<sup>9</sup> executive alone.

#### NUMBER AND GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

Municipal libraries administered by boards are now found in every state in the union except Delaware, where the library laws provide only for the school-district type. Although in seven states<sup>10</sup> the library laws do not specifically provide for the administration of libraries by boards and permit cities to organize libraries in any way they please, the board system has been generally followed in all of them by local initiative.

Almost exactly two-thirds of the 310 American cities and other municipal units with a population of 30,000 or over in 1930 have libraries which may be classified in this group. The total number of cities is 201,<sup>11</sup> and the number of libraries, 204, is slightly larger because some cities have more than one such library.<sup>12</sup> Two stipulations must be made with respect to these figures. In the first place, it should be understood that it contains examples of library boards of all kinds, ranging from the most powerful to those whose powers are almost negligible. Second, the list includes only those libraries which are under the

<sup>8</sup> L. D. White, *Trends in Public Administration* (New York, 1933), pp. 64-65; T. H. Reed, *Municipal Government in the United States* (rev. ed.; New York, 1934), p. 286; E. D. Graper, *American Police Administration* (New York, 1921), pp. 44-53.

<sup>9</sup> Not always literally true, unfortunately.

<sup>10</sup> Alabama, Maine, Mississippi, New Mexico, Texas, Virginia, Wyoming (see p. 59).

<sup>11</sup> To this number might be added the township of Upper Darby, Pa., which has a population of over 30,000.

<sup>12</sup> To this figure should be added for entire completeness independent libraries for negroes under their own boards in Greensboro, Asheville, Durham, and Wilmington, N.C., and also in Savannah, Ga. These are not included in the statistics given throughout this chapter.



control of cities or other municipalities. It does not include school-district libraries, corporation or association libraries, municipal libraries without boards, or libraries which are part of the county government. Quite a number of the libraries here included serve counties or parts of counties, but the actual governmental basis in all cases is municipal. For the sake of accuracy and convenience, a list of these libraries is presented in Table VIII.

Among the smaller cities and in towns, villages, and other minor units of local government,<sup>13</sup> the proportion of municipally controlled libraries under board management is somewhat higher.<sup>14</sup> The task of making a completely accurate tabulation of all such libraries would be one of considerable magnitude. However, a careful approximation, with necessary adjustments, indicates that three-fourths of the 3,000 public libraries officially tabulated by the Office of Education in 1929 fall in this general class.<sup>15</sup>

A few generalizations regarding the geographical distribution of this dominant type of library government throughout the country may be made. In New England the only other type found is the corporation or association library. In the Central Atlantic states it is the most important type, but there are many exceptions. Corporation and association libraries are numerous in Pennsylvania and New York; school-district libraries are also important in these two states and in West Virginia and Delaware; and New Jersey has a strong group of county libraries. In the Middle West the municipal type is heavily predominant except in Ohio, where most of the libraries are of the school-district type, and in Michigan, which also has numerous school-district libraries. In Indiana county libraries are important, but are mainly city and county libraries, with county

<sup>13</sup> See p. 171.

<sup>14</sup> Owing to the more general application of state library laws in case of unincorporated places.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Office of Education, *Statistics of Public, Society and School Libraries, 1929*, (Bulletin No. 37 [1930]). (Includes only libraries of over 3,000 vols.)

TABLE VIII

MUNICIPAL LIBRARIES MANAGED BY BOARDS IN CITIES  
OF OVER 30,000 POPULATION

|                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Alabama:</i><br>Birmingham                                                                                                                                                                         | <i>Georgia:</i><br>Atlanta<br>Macon (Price)<br>Savannah                                                                                                                                                                                          | <i>Kansas:</i><br>Topeka<br>Wichita                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <i>Michigan:</i><br>Bay City (2)<br>Dearborn<br>Detroit<br>Grand Rapids<br>Hamtramck<br>Highland Park<br>Port Huron                                             |
| <i>Arizona:</i><br>Phoenix<br>Tucson                                                                                                                                                                  | <i>Illinois:</i><br>Aurora<br>Berwyn<br>Bloomington<br>Chicago<br>Cicero<br>Danville<br>Decatur<br>East St. Louis<br>Elgin<br>Evanston<br>Joliet<br>Moline<br>Oak Park<br>Peoria<br>Quincy<br>Rockford<br>Rock Island<br>Springfield<br>Waukegan | <i>Kentucky:</i><br>Covington<br>Lexington<br>Louisville<br>Paducah                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <i>Arkansas:</i><br>Fort Smith<br>Little Rock                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <i>Louisiana:</i><br>New Orleans<br>Shreveport                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <i>Minnesota:</i><br>Duluth<br>Minneapolis                                                                                                                      |
| <i>California:</i><br>Alameda<br>Berkeley<br>Glendale<br>Los Angeles<br>Oakland<br>Pasadena<br>San Bernardino<br>San Diego<br>San Francisco<br>San Jose<br>Santa Ana<br>Santa Barbara<br>Santa Monica |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <i>Maine:</i><br>Lewiston                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <i>Mississippi:</i><br>Jackson<br>Meridian                                                                                                                      |
| <i>Colorado:</i><br>Colorado<br>Springs<br>Denver<br>Pueblo                                                                                                                                           | <i>Indiana:</i><br>Anderson<br>East Chicago<br>Elkhart<br>Evansville<br>Gary<br>Hammond<br>Muncie<br>Richmond                                                                                                                                    | <i>Maryland:</i><br>Cumberland                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <i>Missouri:</i><br>Joplin<br>St. Joseph<br>St. Louis<br>Springfield                                                                                            |
| <i>Connecticut:</i><br>Bridgeport<br>Meriden<br>New Haven<br>Norwalk<br>Waterbury                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <i>Massachusetts:</i><br>Arlington<br>Boston<br>Brockton<br>Brookline<br>Cambridge<br>Chelsea<br>Chicopee<br>Everett (2)<br>Fall River<br>Fitchburg<br>Haverhill<br>Lawrence<br>Lowell<br>Lynn<br>Medford<br>New Bedford<br>Newton<br>Quincy<br>Revere<br>Salem<br>Somerville<br>Taunton<br>Waltham<br>Watertown<br>Worcester | <i>Montana:</i><br>Butte                                                                                                                                        |
| <i>District of Columbia:</i><br>Washington                                                                                                                                                            | <i>Iowa:</i><br>Cedar Rapids<br>Council Bluffs<br>Davenport<br>Des Moines<br>Dubuque<br>Sioux City<br>Waterloo                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <i>Nebraska:</i><br>Lincoln<br>Omaha                                                                                                                            |
| <i>Florida:</i><br>Jacksonville<br>Tampa                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <i>New Hampshire:</i><br>Manchester<br>Nashua                                                                                                                   |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <i>New Jersey:</i><br>Atlantic City<br>Bloomfield<br>Camden<br>Clifton<br>East Orange<br>Elizabeth<br>Irvington<br>Jersey City<br>Kearny<br>Montclair<br>Newark |

TABLE VIII—*Continued*

|                                         |                        |                                           |                    |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <i>New Jersey—</i><br><i>Continued:</i> | <i>North Carolina:</i> | <i>Pennsylvania—</i><br><i>Continued:</i> | <i>Utah:</i>       |
| New Bruns-<br>wick                      | Asheville              | Reading                                   | Ogden              |
| Passaic                                 | Charlotte              | Scranton                                  | Salt Lake City     |
| Paterson                                | Durham                 | Upper Darby*                              | <i>Virginia:</i>   |
| Plainfield                              | Greensboro             | Williamsport                              | Richmond           |
| Trenton                                 | High Point             |                                           | Roanoke            |
|                                         | Wilmington             | <i>Rhode Island:</i>                      |                    |
|                                         | Winston-<br>Salem      | Pawtucket                                 | <i>Washington:</i> |
|                                         |                        | Woonsocket                                | Bellingham         |
|                                         | <i>Ohio:</i>           | <i>South Dakota:</i>                      | Everett            |
| <i>New York:</i>                        | Columbus               | Sioux Falls                               | Seattle            |
| Albany                                  | Portsmouth             |                                           | Spokane            |
| Binghamton                              | Steubenville           | <i>Tennessee:</i>                         | Tacoma             |
| New Rochelle                            |                        | Chattanooga                               |                    |
| New York (2)                            | <i>Oklahoma:</i>       | Knoxville                                 | <i>Wisconsin:</i>  |
| Niagara Falls                           | Muskogee               |                                           | Green Bay          |
| Poughkeepsie                            | Oklahoma               | <i>Texas:</i>                             | Kenosha            |
| Rochester                               | City                   | Austin                                    | Madison            |
| Schenectady                             | Tulsa                  | Beaumont                                  | Milwaukee          |
| Syracuse                                | <i>Pennsylvania:</i>   | Dallas†                                   | Oshkosh            |
| Utica                                   | Bethlehem              | Fort Worth†                               | Racine             |
| Watertown                               | New Castle             | Houston                                   | Sheboygan          |
| White Plains                            | Philadelphia           | Port Arthur                               | Superior           |
| Yonkers                                 | Pittsburgh             | San Antonio                               | West Allis         |
|                                         |                        | Wichita Falls                             |                    |

\* Township; not included in tabulated figures.

† Also classed as association library.

members added to the regular municipal library boards. In the South the field is divided between municipal, corporation, and a growing number of county libraries. The Far Western states present a mixture of municipal and county libraries, with the two types sometimes, as in California, existing side by side.<sup>16</sup>

Uniformity of organization among such a great number of separate units cannot be expected, and the situation seems at first almost hopelessly confused. But closer examination reveals that certain rather large groups of libraries in particular states are practically identical in form and may thus be conveniently referred to by state names. Recalling the previous discussion in chapter ii,<sup>17</sup> it is of course obvious that such detailed uniformity

<sup>16</sup> See p. 269.<sup>17</sup> See p. 62.

of organization is to be found only in those states in which the general state library law is very detailed and specific and in which also the application of this law is not affected by the operation of municipal home rule among the cities or by other means of local variation. Most important of these state types because of the numbers of libraries included and the high degree of exact uniformity in their legal structure are those of Illinois,<sup>18</sup> Indiana,<sup>19</sup> Iowa,<sup>20</sup> and Wisconsin,<sup>20</sup> in the Middle West, and New Jersey in the East.

It is well known that the board system of administration has been widely used in American municipal government. At the present time its importance is declining in favor of the single-executive type of departmental administration.<sup>21</sup> In view of this tendency the frequency with which the library board is now found as a member of the large family of municipal boards is of special interest. The statistics on this point are shown in Table IX. For the sake of completeness the table includes, in addition to the boards of municipal libraries, other types of library boards as well.

A summary of the facts presented in Table IX shows that 283 public libraries in cities of the 30,000-population group are managed by library boards. Disregarding duplication of libraries within the same city, the number of cities with library boards is 277, and the number of cities without library boards is 33. The qualifying statement should of course be added that of the 277 cities, only 201 have municipal library boards, the other boards belonging in the corporation, school-district, or county groups. It is therefore almost exactly correct to say that nine-tenths of the American cities of over 30,000 population have libraries which are managed by library boards and that two-thirds of the cities have library boards of the municipal type.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Provisions of the Illinois law affecting the appointment and number of library boards in villages and towns vary somewhat from those regarding boards in cities.

<sup>19</sup> Indiana has also a separate township library law.

<sup>20</sup> Number of trustees varies.

<sup>21</sup> Reed, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

<sup>22</sup> Tabulations in *Municipal Year Book*, 1934, pp. 121-27, are not wholly consistent with respect to different types of library boards.

Next to the practically universal board of education,<sup>23</sup> therefore, the library board is the most common board in American city government. According to a recent compilation, the boards most often found, after the board of education and the library board, are the city planning commission, the park board, the board of health, and the civil service commission.<sup>24</sup> In at least

TABLE IX  
LIBRARY BOARDS IN CITIES OF OVER 30,000 POPULATION

| Types of Libraries                            | Mayor-Council Cities | Commission Cities | Manager Cities | Total |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------|
| Number of cities . . . . .                    | 160                  | 81                | 69             | 310*  |
| <i>Libraries with boards:</i>                 |                      |                   |                |       |
| Municipal . . . . .                           | 108                  | 53                | 43             | 204   |
| Corporation or association . . . . .          | 29                   | 16                | 9              | 54    |
| School district . . . . .                     | 15                   | 3                 | 5              | 23    |
| County (county-seat cities) . . . . .         | 1                    | 0                 | 1              | 2     |
| Total . . . . .                               | 153                  | 72                | 58             | 283   |
| <i>Libraries without boards:</i>              |                      |                   |                |       |
| Municipal . . . . .                           | 1                    | 6                 | 6              | 13    |
| Libraries under boards of education . . . . . | 8                    | 3                 | 6              | 17    |
| County (county-seat cities) . . . . .         | 0                    | 1                 | 1              | 2     |
| Total . . . . .                               | 9                    | 10                | 13             | 32    |

\* One mayor-council city and 1 manager city have no libraries. One mayor-council city is a branch of a county library. Total number of libraries (315) exceeds number of cities because of duplication of libraries in same city.

five cities<sup>25</sup> the library board is the only surviving municipal board in addition to the board of education, and in six others there is only one other board besides the school board and the library board.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> And it must be recalled that the board of education, as a matter of law, is generally considered a state rather than a local agency.

<sup>24</sup> *Municipal Year Book*, 1934, p. 121.

<sup>25</sup> Highland Park, Mich.; Lincoln, Neb.; Port Huron, Mich.; Roanoke, Va.; Wichita Falls, Tex.

<sup>26</sup> Alameda, Calif.; Irvington, N.J.; Kenosha, Wis.; New Rochelle, N.Y.; Pasadena, Calif.; Pawtucket, R.I.



A glance at the table also shows clearly how commonly library boards are found in all types of city government—a fact which substantiates the now familiar idea that there is only a slight correlation between the type of city government and the organization of the library. The existence of library boards would naturally be expected in mayor-council cities, in which the old decentralized type of municipal government is still common. However, as the table indicates, administration of libraries by boards is still predominant in commission and manager cities as well.

In a very few cities organized under home-rule charters, a tendency to make the library board exactly like other administrative boards may be observed. The most striking example of this sort is Los Angeles, with its sixteen boards all precisely the same.<sup>27</sup> In Tucson, Arizona, the charter makes the library, playground, and park boards identical in organization and composition.<sup>28</sup>

#### APPOINTMENT AND ELECTION OF LIBRARY BOARDS

Ultimate control of the library board is achieved through the machinery established for its creation and continuation. It is therefore necessary to examine in some detail the various methods by which members of library boards in municipal libraries are chosen. In approaching this subject we are at once faced with the basic question as to the extent to which control through appointment is to be surrendered to the governing body of the city or other local government. As might be expected from the general trend of library history, such control has by no means always been yielded completely.

The consequences (good or bad) of vesting the appointment of library boards in the hands of the city government may be avoided in several ways: (1) by making the board a self-perpetuating body, (2) by its election by popular vote, (3) by its appointment by more than a single authority, or (4) by specifying

<sup>27</sup> *Charter*, 1929, art. vi, sec. 70.

<sup>28</sup> *Charter*, 1929, chap. xxiv.

that it shall be nominated or appointed by some authority other than the governing body of the city—for example, by the board of education. In practice we find that all of these plans are being employed in the choosing of members of library boards. In the following section the methods used in the approximately two hundred municipal libraries in cities of over 30,000 population will be analyzed, and the general practice among small libraries will also be noted.

The device of the self-perpetuating board, which we have seen so frequently employed in connection with corporation and association libraries, removes the library's governing board completely from control through municipal appointment. In fact, it is perhaps scarcely correct to designate libraries with boards of this sort as true municipal libraries, and their inclusion in the municipal group may well be questioned. Yet these libraries are not private corporations. Either the city itself has been made responsible for the kind of organization which exists through provisions of charters or ordinances, or through popular vote, or else the method is prescribed by state law. The following cities in the 30,000-or-over class have self-perpetuating library boards: Bridgeport, Colorado Springs, Fort Smith, Salem, Schenectady, Utica, Wichita Falls, and Williamsport. Half of the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh boards are self-perpetuating, as is part of the board of the Sage Library, Bay City. Only one state library law, that of Colorado, provides for this method of appointment, but the plan is not followed in such home-rule cities as Denver and Pueblo.

The adoption of this plan has sometimes been due to stipulations made by donors, as in the Sage Library in Bay City, Salem, and Williamsport, or to special conditions regarding the consolidation of public and private collections as in Philadelphia. It ordinarily removes all danger of political interference, and this has undoubtedly been a powerful reason for the use of the method. Complete lack of municipal representation on such boards is avoided by provisions for *ex officio* members representing the city government in all but two cities. Without such

representation, the city is indeed surrendering all semblance of control over the board, save through the power of the purse. From the viewpoint of ease and smoothness of administration there is no doubt but that this plan has important advantages. On the other hand, it is subject to obvious dangers of stagnation and failure to represent the community adequately, similar to those already suggested in the case of corporate libraries. The number of self-elected boards is gradually decreasing. San Francisco dropped out of the list with a new charter effective in 1932,<sup>29</sup> and New Orleans in the same year,<sup>30</sup> and it may safely be predicted that the number will continue to decline.

The elected library board at the present time is, with a very few exceptions, not found in cities, but is confined to towns, townships, and villages. The only cities of over 30,000 population which now elect their boards are Atlanta, Grand Rapids, Minneapolis, and Waterbury. In addition elected boards are found in the following places of over 30,000 population, not incorporated as cities: the towns of Arlington, Brookline, and Watertown in Massachusetts, and the town of Cicero, the village of Oak Park, and the township of Elgin in Illinois. State laws provide for the election of trustees in minor units of local government in several states,<sup>31</sup> and boards chosen in this manner are found in numbers throughout New England and in Illinois and Michigan.

Of course, the elected board goes back to the ultimate source of all power, the people. It is argued that election of the board results in greater popular interest in the library and in a feeling of support by the whole community.<sup>32</sup> This may be quite true in places where there is a good tradition in both municipal and

<sup>29</sup> *Charter of the City and County of San Francisco*, 1931, sec. 43.

<sup>30</sup> New Orleans, Ordinance No. 13620, "Commission Council Series," February 25, 1932 (Calendar No. 14217).

<sup>31</sup> California, Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, Vermont, Washington.

<sup>32</sup> *Meeting of Librarians of Public Libraries in Cities of More than 100,000 Population . . . Dec. 28, 1922* (Newark, N.J., 1923), pp. 14-15. (Statement by S. H. Ranck, Grand Rapids.)

library government. The method is most likely to be successful in cities where local elections are non-partisan in character; in places where elections are still partisan<sup>33</sup> it is doubtful whether results will be as satisfactory as in the case of appointed boards. Moreover, in small towns, where all candidates are well known to the voters, election of board members is a safer method than in larger places where personal knowledge of candidates by the voters is much less likely. As a matter of fact, in the larger places candidates for board membership must be fairly prominent in order to insure their election.

In general, all the usual arguments made in favor of the short-ballot principle, in which the attention of the voter is limited to a few key positions only, would seem to apply to the system of electing library board members.<sup>34</sup> The spectacle of Ray Stannard Baker running on the Republican ticket for the position of trustee of the Jones Library in Amherst, Massachusetts, is an excellent example of popular interest in local government, but in most cases of the sort it would appear that appointment would be a simpler and surer method.

In spite of what has been said, it must be admitted that elected boards have been very successful in several of the places mentioned above, especially in Minneapolis and Grand Rapids. In both these cities good men and women have been willing to run for the office of trustee and frequent re-election of members has been the rule. When a tradition of this sort has been established in a city, it seems unwise to change the existing form for theoretical reasons.

The ingenious plan which provides for the appointment of the library board in sections by several different authorities is common only in Indiana, where it is a distinctive feature of the state law governing municipal libraries. Of the seven members of the Board, three are appointed by the judge of the Circuit Court of the county, two by the Common Council of the city,

<sup>33</sup> As in Cicero, Ill., for example.

<sup>34</sup> For instance, R. S. Childs, *Short-Ballot Principles* (Boston, 1911), pp. 21-50.



and two by the Board of School Trustees.<sup>35</sup> Three different public corporations—the county, the civil city, and the school city—are thus involved in the creation of a fourth corporate body, the library board. The obvious purpose of this law was to lessen the possibility of political influence by a single appointing authority. The plan seems to have worked well in general, although it has been by no means infallible. The unusual independence and the important corporate powers of Indiana library boards perhaps justify to some extent the employment of the method.

Appointment of a municipal library board by the board of education is of course similar, in purpose and form, to the plan just mentioned. The fact that the board is so appointed does not necessarily make the library a school-district library of the Ohio type. In general, it simply confers the power of appointment of the library board on the board of education rather than on the mayor or council. In all other respects the library is strictly a city function rather than a school-district function, and it is supported from city funds. This type of organization is found in several cities already described as being on the border line between the school-district type and the municipal type—Detroit and Bay City in Michigan, and Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, and Yonkers in New York. The only state library law which provides for this type of organization is that of North Dakota, where the library board of five members is appointed by the board of education.<sup>36</sup> About thirty public libraries, of which Fargo is the largest, are organized under this law.

Apparently the motivating reason behind such appointment is in part the desire to classify the library as an educational function and in part to secure the appointment of the board by an authority less likely to be influenced by political considerations than the city council. Whether the results bear out the theory

<sup>35</sup> *Burns' Annotated Indiana Statutes*, 1926, secs. 9663-79. Cincinnati was formerly a classic example of this sort, with a board appointed by four different authorities (*Laws of Ohio*, 93, 1898, pp. 191-94).

<sup>36</sup> North Dakota, *Compiled Laws*, 1913, sec. 4008.



in this case is problematical. The high quality of the Detroit board leads to a presumption in favor of the plan, but similar results do not appear to have followed in all other cities. As a matter of structure, the comment may be made that it results in diffused responsibility for library control, with appointing and appropriating authority vested in different hands.

An interesting example of the partial fusion of two systems is to be observed in a group of cities in which the library board is appointed by the city manager. The larger cities in which boards are thus appointed are Fall River, Oklahoma City, Rochester, San Diego, and San Jose, and a few examples are found in smaller places as well. The oldest example of this kind is San Jose, where the charter of 1916 provided for a library board appointed in this manner; with this exception, the adoption of the plan is very much more recent. Apparently a minor "trend" has been established. In a sense a compromise is being effected between the manager plan in its typical form and the strongly resisting library-board plan. Instead of abolishing the library board altogether, charter drafters have sought to retain its advantages as far as possible, but have been consistent in following the general form of manager government to the extent of permitting the manager to appoint the board.

But the methods of appointment mentioned up to this point are, as numbers go, relatively unimportant. They account for only about one-fifth of the larger cities and a somewhat larger proportion of the smaller places. The great majority of library boards are appointed either by the chief executive of the city or by the council, commission, or other governing body, or by the council on recommendation of the mayor. One or the other of these methods is found in 156 of the 203 cities with libraries managed by boards in the 30,000-population group. In about 50 cities the board is appointed by the mayor alone, without council confirmation. This group includes such well-known examples of the "strong-mayor" type of municipal government as Denver, Boston, and San Francisco. In 32 cities appointment is by the council, and in the remainder by the council on nomination

of the mayor or by joint action of mayor and council. Even though the mayor may not possess the sole power of appointment, he frequently takes the initiative in bringing names before the council for consideration and therefore is still extremely influential in the selection of members.

A concluding remark must be made regarding the appointment of library boards. Looking behind the formal legal provisions for board appointments, one finds in many cities that the library board itself wields important influence in the choice of its members. In some instances, this influence amounts almost to self-perpetuation; in a much larger number of cities it merely takes the form of tactful suggestions which often result in the appointment of the desired individuals. Likewise, a strong librarian often comes in time to be consulted with respect to appointments to the library board; it is not too much to say that the membership of some library boards represents very largely the desires of the librarian. On the other hand, there are many cases in which the board is not consulted at all and is left entirely in the dark with reference to the filling of vacancies.

#### MEMBERSHIP OF LIBRARY BOARDS

*Number of members.*—It is well known that the number of members in library boards varies greatly. Among the municipal libraries, however, there is probably less variation than might be expected, owing in large part to the standardizing tendency of state library laws. While membership ranges from three to as high as twenty-five in number, three-fourths of the boards in cities of 30,000 or over fall in the group containing five to nine members. The average for all the municipal libraries is almost exactly eight (including ex officio members) and the most common numbers are nine, seven, and five, in the order named. Among the smaller libraries the average membership is considerably lower, since many of the state laws provide for boards with fewer members in smaller cities and villages. It should be noted that the municipal boards are much smaller than the boards

of corporate libraries, which were found to average thirteen members.<sup>37</sup>

Professional opinion among librarians is decidedly in favor of reduction in the number of board members. The larger boards, especially those numbering ten or more members, are usually found to be unwieldy and cumbersome as administrative bodies. Their one advantage is that they may represent more parts of the city or more population groups, but it is doubtful whether this result is often actually achieved. To some extent the general sentiment in favor of smaller and more compact boards has been put into practice by legislation reducing the number of members.

*Ex officio members.*—Definite connection between the library administration and the city, and to a somewhat less extent between the library and the school system, is often provided by *ex officio* membership on library boards.

Library legislation with respect to the membership of council representatives on the library board has exhibited curiously opposite tendencies. In a few state laws there is an absolute prohibition against council members on the library board.<sup>38</sup> The same fear against council domination of the board is found in the widely copied Illinois law, which provides that not more than one councilman may be a library-board member.<sup>39</sup> Unless such a prohibition is actually contained in the law or charter, there is, of course, nothing to prevent the council from loading the library board with its own members, but no concrete evidence of such a tendency at the present time has been discovered.

An exactly opposite policy is found in the definite provision that certain officials must be library-board members. At the present time *ex officio* members are designated in at least seventy-five larger cities and are required by many library laws.

<sup>37</sup> See p. 91.

<sup>38</sup> Florida, Missouri, New York, Nebraska, Tennessee.

<sup>39</sup> Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, Wisconsin (American Library Association, *Survey* [1926], II, 254-55; Illinois provision in *Cahill's Illinois Revised Statutes*, 1933, chap. 81, sec. 2).

Most common of all the ex officio members is the mayor, who is a library-board member in fifty-six cities and is chairman or president of the board in at least seven of these. The most important state law making this provision is that of New Jersey,<sup>40</sup> and similar provisions are found in a few other state laws.<sup>41</sup> Of course the mayor can be a very powerful and influential board member if he so chooses and if he has time for his library duties. In at least half of the cities in which he is officially a board member he is almost wholly inactive.

Ex officio membership of city council representatives other than the mayor is less common, with twenty-one examples<sup>42</sup> in cities of over 30,000 population. Sometimes the president of the city council is a member, or the presidents of the two branches in bicameral councils. Quite a number of city charters merely provide that a member of the council shall be a member of the library board, leaving the council power to designate which member shall serve. The Wisconsin library law provides that there shall be one such member in commission-governed cities.<sup>43</sup> It may be suggested that this form of ex officio council representation on library boards is worthy of more consideration than it has received. Such a member acts as a valuable liaison officer between board and council; his presence to a degree at least takes away the curse of aloofness so often charged against the library board; and he may provide the library with a powerful friend at court. He is likely to be chosen because he has special qualifications for the position, and is therefore to be preferred over the incumbent of a specified office, who may or may not be suited for the place. Finally, he is much more likely to have time for the performance of his library duties than is the mayor.

The list of other municipal officers who are sometimes ex offi-

<sup>40</sup> New Jersey, *1925-30 Supplement to Compiled Statutes*, sec. 115-69.

<sup>41</sup> Kansas, Colorado, and in some Kentucky cities. The important Indiana township trustee is a member of township library boards.

<sup>42</sup> Milwaukee is a good example; three of the seven appointive members are aldermen (Wisconsin, *Statutes*, 1931, sec. 43.36).

<sup>43</sup> Wisconsin, *Statutes*, 1931, sec. 43.26.



cio members of library boards is short and scattering and need not be enumerated. In only one instance is the city manager an ex officio board member,<sup>44</sup> although he may sometimes be appointed to the board as an individual citizen rather than by virtue of his office.<sup>45</sup>

Inclusion of ex officio representatives of the school system on the library board is a natural connection between institutions interested in a common purpose and is quite widely followed, both in large and in smaller cities. The superintendent of schools, the officer most often designated for this purpose, is a library-board member in thirty-six cities of over 30,000 population and his membership on all library boards is required by the important library laws of New Jersey and Wisconsin.<sup>46</sup> In a much smaller number of cases the president of the board of education is made an ex officio library-board member.<sup>47</sup>

In connection with the ex officio membership of the superintendent of schools on the library board, an interesting question arises. In such a situation the executive officer of the school system becomes in effect the superior of the executive officer of the library system. In other words, the co-ordinate position usually enjoyed by the two officers may be disturbed by this relationship. While theoretical objection to this arrangement is sometimes found, there is little indication of serious difficulty in this respect. In a few cities, notably Washington, D.C., the superintendent of schools has been chosen for membership as an individual, not because of his position. The advantage of this method is that no positive commitment is made. When the superintendent is obviously good board material he can be appointed; when not so qualified he need not be selected. On the whole, the superintendent seems to be a fairly active and useful member, much more attentive to his library responsibilities than the mayor.

<sup>44</sup> Watertown, N.Y.

<sup>45</sup> Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.

<sup>46</sup> Wisconsin, *Statutes*, 1931, sec. 43.26; New Jersey, *1925-30 Supplement to the Compiled Statutes*, sec. 115-69.

<sup>47</sup> In nine cities, including Detroit, Pittsburgh, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, and Rochester. Member of board of education on library board also required by North Dakota library law, *Compiled Laws*, 1913, sec. 4008.



A few instances may be recorded in which the holders of certain positions, not of a municipal nature, are made ex officio board members. Most interesting of all of these is the membership of the president of the University of Minnesota on the Minneapolis board. In the Sage Library of Bay City, Michigan, the ministers of nine denominations represented by churches in the portion of the city west of the Saginaw River are designated as board members. In Williamsport, Pennsylvania, the rector of Christ Church is a member. In Scranton, Pennsylvania, the board is composed of five clergymen, three Chamber of Commerce representatives, three members of the bar, and four citizens at large. Needless to say, specifications of this sort represent the wishes of a donor which have been given legal force.

*Qualifications for board members.*—Many and varied specifications regarding the qualifications for board membership have been made. These include such matters as residence in the city, citizenship, sex, politics, age, and length of residence, and it is impossible to attempt to state these in detail in the compass of this chapter.<sup>48</sup> A few comments on some of the most important of these requirements may, however, be made.

With respect to the sex of board members, the right of women to serve on library boards seems no longer to require special protection. Legislation in this connection has taken two directions: first, that of declaring that both men and women are eligible for membership; and, second, the specification of a definite number of women as board members. A good example is the Indiana library law, which provides that there shall be at least three women members on all library boards.<sup>49</sup> The strong assistance given by women's clubs in securing public library legislation was doubtless a reason for some of these provisions. At the present day, hard-and-fast requirements of this sort seem both unnecessary and unwise.

Theoretically, of course, the question of party politics should never be raised in connection with library-board membership.

<sup>48</sup> They are summarized to some extent in American Library Association, *Survey* (Chicago, 1926), II, 253-55, 265-305.

<sup>49</sup> *Burns' Annotated Indiana Statutes*, 1926, sec. 9665.

Non-partisanship, rather than bi-partisanship, should be the ideal sought. In states or in cities where local government is conducted on a non-partisan basis, specifications regarding the political affiliations of board members seem to be wholly unnecessary. In states or cities where local government is strongly partisan, it may be wise to limit the number of members belonging to a certain party. On the whole, there seems to be more danger in suggesting the question of partisanship by specific mention in the law than in ignoring it entirely.

No definite requirements regarding the educational qualifications of board members have ever been written into library law, although the desirability of such provisions has been suggested. The Indiana law has gone farther than others in this respect in requiring the selection of "persons of well known probity, integrity, business ability and experience . . . fitted for the character of the work they are to perform."<sup>50</sup> "Fitness" for the office of trustee is also quite often specified.<sup>51</sup> But it is difficult to make rather vague terms such as these mean anything positive, and the value of their use is open to serious question.

Selection of library-board members from the city at large is almost universal. Ward representation is found in only three cities of over 30,000 population—Oklahoma City, Atlanta, and in New Orleans for part of the board. Although the plan appears to have been successful in operation in Atlanta, there seems little reason for its general adoption. Geographical representation of certain districts of the city is often desirable, but a hard-and-fast system of representation by wards, with its rather severe limitations on the choice of available members, scarcely seems the best way to secure it. The mere accident of residence should not be the determining factor in selecting board members.

#### TERM OF OFFICE OF BOARD MEMBERS

Library opinion regarding the term of office of trustees has been strongly concentrated on two simple objectives: (1) a reasonably long term of office and (2) overlapping expiration dates.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> In Illinois, Kansas, and Connecticut, for example.

Used in conjunction, these two methods result in permanent and slowly changing board membership. A very typical method is to make the term of office and the number of members the same, so that it may be arranged to have one member go out of office each year. Such plans are found sometimes in the three-year period, very often in the five-year period, and only occasionally in terms of seven years or longer.<sup>52</sup> A variation provides for the expiration of two or three terms annually—a plan which is ordinarily found in connection with the three-year term of office.<sup>53</sup> On the whole, this ideal of continuity has been approximated in most state laws and in many city charters.

The three-year term of office is most common, with the five-year period next in frequency. The average term for all the two hundred cities of 30,000 or more in the municipal library group is just under four years in length.<sup>54</sup> Three-fourths of all these libraries are concentrated in a group with terms of three to seven years, and the provisions of state library laws conform to the same trend.

At either end of the normal range are interesting divergences. At one extreme is life-tenure, found in nine cities, or unusually long terms of nine to twelve years found in three other cities. These long terms are frequently associated with self-perpetuation of board membership and are characteristic of the older and more conservative cities of the East and South. At the other extreme is a small group of cities in which the board members serve at the pleasure of the appointing authority. It is to be noted that most of these are cities with new-type manager-plan charters. In practice, indefinite tenure of this sort has not meant brief terms of service but rather long ones. To terminate the service of a board member thus appointed is a rather overt act, which is far less likely to be exercised than a change in mem-

<sup>52</sup> In 30,000 class of cities examples are: three-year period, 7; five-year period, 36; six-year period, 9; seven-year period, 3; longer period, 4. Ohio school-district boards, seven years.

<sup>53</sup> Large number of examples, including laws of such states as Illinois and Massachusetts.

<sup>54</sup> In the 30,000 class examples are: three-year term, 74; five-year term, 43.

bership at the end of a term. There are only three examples of one-year terms and only fourteen of two-year terms.<sup>55</sup> Real continuity is, of course, very easily prevented by terms as short as these, and appointing authorities have not hesitated to take advantage of the opportunity to change the personnel of library boards for political reasons.<sup>56</sup>

The mere designation of a fixed term of office with overlapping expiration dates, however, does not absolutely insure the continuity or permanence of the library board. There still remains the possibility of the actual dismissal of the board by the appointing authority. This is a matter which has not had sufficient attention in the framing of library laws and charter provisions.

For example, the power to dismiss board members may still be vested in the hands of the mayor or council even though appointment was made for a fixed term. In such cases the whole theory of overlapping terms of office may be nullified in practice. Further, the question of misconduct or neglect of duty may not necessarily be involved. Unless the law or charter under which the library is governed specifically provides for removal only for cause, the possibility of wholesale change for political or other reasons still exists. As a concrete example of this danger it may be stated that the members of one library board were dismissed under the general charter provision that all appointive officers "hold their respective offices or positions at the pleasure of the appointing power," even though the members in this case were appointed for four-year terms.<sup>57</sup> Dismissal of another board appointed for seven-year terms occurred because they were "subject to removal by the mayor," with no proviso that removal should be made only for cause.<sup>58</sup> Other more or less similar cases are matters of record.

<sup>55</sup> The two-year term is a feature of the Indiana law for municipal libraries.

<sup>56</sup> Several examples could be cited.

<sup>57</sup> Glendale, *Charter*, 1931, art. iv, sec. 1.

<sup>58</sup> Seattle, *Charter*, 1928, art. xiv, sec. 3.



Only about a fourth of the state library laws cover this point. Most of these follow the Illinois statute, which provides that the mayor, with the consent of the Council, may remove trustees for "misconduct or neglect of duty."<sup>59</sup> The desirability of making such provisions still more specific and of requiring formal hearings of charges before a court is suggested.

Of the value of continuity in library-board membership there can be little reasonable doubt. Practically all of the major administrative problems of a library—its book-purchasing policy, its technical processes, its distribution of actual service through a system of branches and other agencies, and many other matters—require the careful determination of plans and policies long in advance, plus orderly adherence to the general scheme. Such results are best obtained through the general oversight of trustees who remain in office long enough to become thoroughly familiar with the aims and objectives of the library. New members added to the group at not too frequent intervals will gradually acquire complete understanding of the library program.

But there is real difficulty in securing a nice balance between a reasonable amount of continuity and stagnation. It is quite possible that too long extended tenure of office may be fully as dangerous as terms which are too short. No regular plans for the avoidance of this danger have been put into legal form, as far as noted, but they are perhaps worth considering. A rule prohibiting reappointment for one year after a certain number of terms or a definite period of service in years would perhaps be desirable in some cases. This would provide a means for dropping members whose period of usefulness has passed, while it would still permit the reappointment, after a short break, of really desirable members. Either by law or by custom, the tradition of inevitable and continuous reappointment should be avoided.

In conclusion on this matter of tenure of office of library

<sup>59</sup> Colorado, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, Oklahoma, and Utah have this provision. North Carolina adds "incapacity, unfitness," and Indiana merely specifies removal for "cause."



boards, it may be said that the general aim of library authorities to secure uninterrupted administration through continuity of board membership has been achieved with fair success. The spectacle of a complete change in the personnel of municipal boards at the beginning of each new administration, rather common in American cities, has been largely avoided, as far as library boards are concerned, by means of the devices discussed above. There are enough instances of an opposite tendency, however, to make it evident that protection of the term of office of the library board should be continued and perhaps extended in some cities and states.

#### COMPENSATION OF BOARD MEMBERS

The almost universal rule in American public libraries has been that library trustees, except occasionally in the case of a trustee serving as secretary or treasurer, shall not receive compensation for their services. Both city charters and state laws alike have been practically unanimous in the maintenance of this fundamental principle. The first important break in the time-honored tradition was the provision in the Los Angeles charter of 1925 for a five-dollar per diem payment to library commissioners, with a maximum of fifty dollars per month.<sup>60</sup> This change, it should be remarked, was not made on behalf of the library board, but resulted from the desire of the framers of the charter to make entirely uniform provisions for all administrative boards of the city.

Even a single exception to long-established custom in this respect is a matter for regret. There is little reason to doubt that adherence to the principle of voluntary service by library trustees has been an important factor in maintaining the generally high quality of membership which has prevailed. The introduction of a system of payment, even in small amounts, would no doubt tend to make the position of trustee attractive to the wrong type of person. Worse still, perhaps, would be the tendency to increase the number of meetings and to adopt a gener-

<sup>60</sup> *Charter*, 1929, sec. 71.

ally wrong attitude with respect to the proper functions of the board.

#### CONCLUSION

It is often remarked that people are more important in government than is the precise form of organization which is adopted. This is just as true of the library as it is of any other branch of public administration. But the better the people who are in charge of the administrative machine, the more important it is to see that they have a fair chance to perform their duties efficiently and that there are no unnecessary defects in the structural framework on which their authority rests. The details concerning the appointment and membership of the library board which have been discussed in this chapter are important in this respect and deserve most careful attention in the framing of laws and charters governing public libraries.

The discussion in this chapter has necessarily assumed that the library is connected in some way with the municipal government and that it is managed by a board of trustees. Taking for granted at this point the desirability of these conditions, the adoption of any code of best practice in the organization of library boards should be based in part at least on the following principles:

1. If the library serves the city and receives the bulk of its support from taxes raised in or by the city, it is only reasonable to provide that the board be appointed by the mayor or governing body of the city rather than by some other authority. The association of the power of appointment with the power of appropriation is advisable because it clearly places the general responsibility for the proper maintenance of library service on a single governmental authority. Moreover, purely from the viewpoint of financial advantage to the library, it is quite certain that a city council is more likely to be favorably disposed to the library when it has authority to appoint the board than when it is faced with the necessity of appropriating for a body which it does not in a measure control by appointment.

2. It is difficult to provide by formal legislative enactment for all the requirements that seem necessary for board membership without making the resulting restrictions so cumbersome as to defeat their own purpose. The specification of a definite number of women is reminiscent of a day when women were only beginning to be recognized as public servants and appears unnecessary at the present time. In most places it is probably wiser to ignore the question of national partisanship than it is to bring it to the fore by positive stipulations with respect to bi-partisan representation. Dogmatic decisions as to ex officio membership which fit all cases are difficult to support. Strong arguments can be made in favor of such connection with both the city and the school district, but it must be remembered that administrative officers are often too busy to make satisfactory library-board members. If the board membership is large, their failure to attend meetings may not be serious, but it may be very embarrassing in the case of a small board. The possibilities of quasi-ex-officio membership achieved by the appointment of a council member or a member of the board of education or the school superintendent as a matter of custom, rather than by legal requirement, do not seem to have been tested as much as they merit. Such a system is elastic in that it permits the choice of a member because of interest or special qualifications and does not add a member to the board's roster solely because he holds a certain official position. The wisdom of preventing the possibility of filling the board with official members is clear and should be made certain by reasonable provisions of law.

3. A board of five members, appointed at large for terms of five years, will satisfy most situations in the small or medium-sized city. In cities of greater size, a larger membership may prove desirable in some instances in order to provide more complete representation of groups or geographical districts. Continuity of membership, which presumably will result in a sustained policy, should be assured by overlapping terms of office and by protection against removal except for cause.

## CHAPTER VII

### MUNICIPAL LIBRARIES: POWERS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE LIBRARY BOARD

THE governing body of the municipal public library is very generally characterized in written and verbal discussions of library government as the "independent library board." In the frequent repetition of this phrase there is a real danger. Its implications, rather than the actual facts, may be made the basis for the formation of opinions regarding the nature of the board and may even result in the adoption of governmental changes without careful study of its real position. To what extent, exactly, is the library board "independent," and what are its powers and duties as the administrative body which controls the public library? Obviously, this question cannot be answered in the same manner for each of the states, nor even for all the cities and towns of a particular state. The present chapter will attempt to answer it in general terms, using typical libraries or groups of libraries by way of example.

Whatever independence the public library and its board may have achieved is due, it must be confessed, to deliberate planning on the part of librarians and the friends of libraries. The haphazard growth of municipal functions, of course, has made the establishment of the tradition of independence relatively easy. At the present time the idea of strong and separate boards is the generally accepted library doctrine—almost the official doctrine, it may be said. While the system is under active attack by students of municipal government,<sup>1</sup> within the ranks of the library group it is as yet little questioned.

Before beginning any detailed analysis of the powers of libra-

<sup>1</sup> For examples see C. E. Ridley and O. F. Nolting, "Economies in Libraries," *Public Management*, XV (1933), 113; C. E. Merriam and others, *Government of the Metropolitan Region of Chicago* (Chicago, 1933), pp. 101-3.

ry boards it will be necessary, in a brief digression from the main theme, to point out two directions in which control over the public library is exercised, aside from the authority vested in the city council or in the library board. By far the most important of these may be described as popular participation in library control.

#### POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN LIBRARY CONTROL

Under the American system of municipal government it is only on rare occasions that the individual citizen has an opportunity to express himself in any definite or formal manner about the public library. That the library is highly regarded by the general public in many cities is clearly evident, but, on the contrary, it is quite true that many other communities seem to be largely lacking in active library interest. Careful studies in the prestige value of municipal positions have shown that the librarian ranks high among civil servants in the esteem of the public at large.<sup>2</sup> Whether this opinion concerning the librarian as an official may be regarded as evidence of the latent feeling of the citizenry at large with respect to the library as an institution can scarcely be affirmed with assurance.

The first and most fundamental manner in which the citizen is asked to voice an opinion regarding the public library occurs at the time of a plebiscite determining its establishment. A popular vote is by no means always required for the founding of public libraries, but it does occur, in one form or another, in a large number of cases. In many states this is the only manner in which a public library may legally be established.<sup>3</sup> The law of New Jersey, for instance, is very specific in providing that no such library shall be established "unless assented to by a majority of the legal voters."<sup>4</sup> Experienced library extension workers

<sup>2</sup> L. D. White, *Prestige Value of Public Employment in Chicago* (Chicago, 1929), pp. 32, 41.

<sup>3</sup> M. J. Ferguson (comp.), *American Library Laws* (Chicago, 1930). See Index under "Establishment." American Library Association, *Survey* (Chicago, 1926), II, 236-45 (summary).

<sup>4</sup> New Jersey, *Compiled Statutes*, 1910, p. 3105.



often insist that a library is not securely founded until such a popular referendum has resulted in a favorable vote. Certainly it is a positive mandate which gives authority and confidence to the council and the library board in the administration of the library. On the other hand, it may be urged that action by the governing body of the city is simpler and less expensive and that states with successful library systems, such as California, provide for library establishment by council action.

A popular referendum on the adoption of a specific tax levy for the support of the public library is another example of direct action by the people in library affairs. Provisions for this type of referendum, applying to libraries generally, or to certain types of libraries, are found in the library laws of at least seven states.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the most important example of this situation occurs in New Jersey, where the popular vote for the establishment of a public library automatically carries with it the approval of a minimum tax rate of one-third of a mill on the dollar for library support. Another state which has used this method extensively is Illinois, where the same type of combination establishment and tax-rate referendum is held in the case of town, township, and village libraries. In this state the people vote on a fixed tax rate not exceeding 1.2 mills.

The significant point about such popular votes on library tax rates is that the action taken by the people continues in effect until altered by a similar referendum in the future. No discretionary power to lower the rate fixed is left in the hands of the governing body of the town or city. When the minimum rate thus established is low, little objection can be made to the system; it merely assures the library of a very modest income. When the rate determined is relatively high, on the other hand, it may interfere to some extent with considered action by the taxing authorities relative to the general tax policy of the local unit as a whole.

A referendum of a quite different sort is that frequently taken in connection with a bond issue for library sites or buildings. In

<sup>5</sup> Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania.

many campaigns of this sort throughout the country the people themselves have made decisions of great importance concerning their libraries.<sup>6</sup> It is at such times that the latent popular sentiment regarding libraries is afforded an opportunity to express itself, favorably or otherwise.

The election of library boards, mentioned in the preceding chapter, is another example of direct popular control of library government.<sup>7</sup> It is, of course, an indirect method in that it does not permit expression of the popular opinion with reference to any specific question other than the choice of board members.

In New England, where half of the population and more than nine-tenths of the corporate communities operate under the town-meeting plan of local government,<sup>8</sup> the possibilities of direct popular action with respect to libraries are greater than in other parts of the country. Here the citizen, in addition to voting directly for members of his library board, is also permitted to vote on certain questions concerning the library, along with other town affairs. The intimate and human relation of the library to the people under these conditions is shown by the fact that reports of library trustees are frequently addressed directly to the "inhabitants," or the "citizens," or the "voters," of the town, rather than to any official body.

In the "warrant," or call, for the town meeting, is included a notice of the library trustees to be elected and a more or less detailed statement of the proposed library budget. In the small towns this call may merely include an article such as the following: "To see if the Town will vote a sum of money for the Town Library, and if so, how much." In the larger towns the budget may be presented in greater detail. At the present time budgetary matters in Massachusetts towns are usually in the hands of powerful finance or advisory committees which scrutinize the departmental budgets in advance and make their recommenda-

<sup>6</sup> J. L. Wheeler, *The Library and the Community* (Chicago, 1924), pp. 387-93.

<sup>7</sup> See pp. 181-82.

<sup>8</sup> American Geographical Society, *New England's Prospect: 1933* (New York, 1933), pp. 418-19.

tions to the voters. The library budget is then voted on at the town meeting along with the estimates for other departments and apparently does not ordinarily attract a great deal of attention. Occasionally, however, some appropriation not of a routine character, such as the erection of a branch building or the improvement of library grounds, will be made the subject of a special article in the town-meeting warrant and will be considered at length by the assembled voters.<sup>9</sup>

#### AGENCIES OTHER THAN BOARDS EXERCISING LIBRARY CONTROL

In addition to a certain amount of direct action by the people themselves regarding the library, there may be noted a number of more or less formally organized authorities or citizen groups which have to do with the administration of library affairs. Most closely related to the people of all these is the well-known Examining Committee of the Boston Public Library, which is apparently the only active example of this type of public library authority in existence at the present time.<sup>10</sup>

The long history of this interesting and important body, which has been in continuous existence for more than eighty years, makes it worthy of special mention. The annual appointment of the Committee by the Board of Trustees of the Library is authorized by a city ordinance. The Committee is composed of twenty-five citizen members, each carefully chosen for some special service he is able to render, and is presided over by the president of the Board. In addition to a number of leading lawyers and bankers, the Committee in 1933, for example, included the director of vocational education, the state auditor, the president of the Good Government Association, two librarians of university libraries, and several women.<sup>11</sup> For the carrying-out of

<sup>9</sup> For a detailed account of the present-day town meeting see J. F. Sly, *Town Government in Massachusetts* (Cambridge, 1930), pp. 126-64, *et passim*. The reports of New England towns and libraries will afford examples of library business at town meetings.

<sup>10</sup> Similar committees are provided for the two public libraries of Everett, Mass., but these appear to be inactive at the present time (*Consolidated and Revised Ordinances of 1924*, chap. xxvi, sec. 2).

<sup>11</sup> There are no women on the Board itself.

its work, the Committee is divided into a number of subcommittees, each of which makes its own report; these become the basis for the final report of the Committee as a whole, which is always printed as part of the annual report of the Library. Much tact and discernment are necessary on the part of the trustees in the choice of members and the assignment of duties for the Committee. Examination of its reports affords ample proof that constructive criticism of much value has resulted from the Committee's activities and that mere whitewashing has, in general, been avoided.<sup>12</sup> A by-product of the Committee's work is that it frequently serves as a proving ground for future board members.

Branch library advisory committees, composed of citizens residing in the local communities served by city branches, have been appointed only in a few places. Denver<sup>13</sup> and Providence<sup>14</sup> have been two outstanding examples of cities in which this experiment has been tried. In the latter city the development of the plan is now going forward actively. As in the case of the examining committee, it is difficult to take advantage of the obvious services such a committee can render without encountering the equally obvious danger of too much interference in the actual administration of the branch.

The importance of citizens' committees of both the kinds just mentioned seems to make them worthy of much more consideration than has hitherto been given them as devices in library administration. Further experimentation in their use would appear desirable, in view of possible changes in the form of library government in at least two directions. In case of the further departmentalization of library service and the consequent abolition of library boards, committees of this type may serve a useful purpose.<sup>15</sup> Even more important, in the case of the establish-

<sup>12</sup> Boston Public Library, *The Public Library of the City of Boston: The Examining Committee*, 1933 (pamphlet published annually).

<sup>13</sup> *Meeting of Librarians of Public Libraries in Cities of More than 100,000 Population* . . . Dec. 28, 1922 (Newark, N.J., 1923), pp. 12-13.

<sup>14</sup> Providence Public Library, "Branch Neighborhood Advisory Committees," May 1, 1933 (mimeographed sheet).

<sup>15</sup> *Meeting of Librarians, etc.*, p. 13 (remarks by A. E. Bostwick).



ment of large regional library units, similar committees might be used to compensate in a measure for the absence of local library boards.

In a few cities separate boards of trustees responsible for the custody of special funds are found in addition to the library board itself. An important example is the Board of Directors of the Free Library of Philadelphia, which is in effect a holding corporation for the books and endowment funds of the old Free Library. The directors have made a contract with the trustees, the governing body of the present free-library system of the city, specifying in detail the conditions under which the library property is to be held and used in the future.<sup>16</sup> Somewhat similar authorities are to be found in Richmond, Indiana,<sup>17</sup> and in Lawrence, Massachusetts.<sup>18</sup> A board established for a quite different purpose is the Board of Trustees of the Pension Fund of the Chicago Public Library,<sup>19</sup> which holds in trust and administers the pension funds of the library system.

The organization and powers of such special boards of trustees as those mentioned in the preceding paragraph are worthy of study for a particular reason. They provide a possible means by which a private trust may be combined in a working arrangement with a municipally controlled library. Protection of funds and property in a manner satisfactory to the private interests may be thus assured, but the control of the whole library system is not vested in the hands of a private corporation entirely separate from the municipal government.

In America committees of the city council on public library affairs, in marked contrast with the prevailing English system, are uncommon at the present time. Atlanta has such a committee, one of many on a variety of subjects, which is composed of five aldermen and three councilmen. This committee is reported

<sup>16</sup> *By-Laws of the Free Library of Philadelphia, Incorporated 1891* (Philadelphia, 1924).

<sup>17</sup> Trustees of the Reeves Fund, a specially incorporated body.

<sup>18</sup> Trustees of the White Fund, three of whom are members of the Library Board.

<sup>19</sup> *Laws of Illinois*, 1905, pp. 309-13.



to be very influential in library affairs. Little Rock also has a Council Library Committee, which frequently exercises important powers in the administration of the library. In Pittsburgh the six members of the Council Committee on Library are ex officio members of the library board, but apparently do not function actively as a separate committee. Pawtucket has a Joint Council Committee, composed of four members of the Common Council and two aldermen, the chairman of which is an ex officio member of the library board. In general it may be said that in America this particular method is reminiscent of a past fashion in municipal government.

#### POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE LIBRARY BOARD<sup>20</sup>

The best test of the independence or dependence of the public library may be made by examination of the specific and detailed powers which are vested in the library board. Whatever powers and functions the library may exercise independently of the remainder of the city government are carried out in the name of the library board. Within the scope of the general authority thus granted, the board must therefore assume full responsibility for the administration of the library.

*General comments.*—The determination of the exact powers of a particular library board, however, is by no means always as simple a matter as might be supposed. The amount of doubt existing as to just what the board can or cannot do is, the country over, surprisingly large. Sometimes these doubts take the form of more or less active controversies, but relatively few of the disputes reach the courts. Not infrequently the issues involved in questions regarding the authority of boards are of such fundamental importance that library authorities hesitate to raise them for fear of the danger of a general upset. In such cases it seems wise to "let sleeping dogs lie."

Because of this situation there is real necessity in many cities, and in some states as well, for the clarification of the position of

<sup>20</sup> When other authority is not cited in this section, information was obtained from questionnaires and personal visits.

the library and for a more exact definition of the powers of its governing board. Even as widely copied a law as that of Illinois is subject to certain difficulties in interpretation.<sup>21</sup> A general plea for a deliberate attempt to remedy this situation is decidedly in order. In the long run, most of the questions concerning which there is doubt are likely to be raised. In many cities it would appear to be the part of wisdom to undertake a general settlement of possible points of conflict in advance rather than to wait until specific occasion for dispute arises. The feelings of both board and council are perhaps less likely to be ruffled if such questions are regarded as matters of theory rather than as actual controversies. Every opportunity for frank and constructive discussion of the subject should be embraced. If, as already suggested, the exact powers which the library board may exercise are clearly enumerated in one place in law or charter, possibilities for disagreement should be minimized.

Difficulties of the sort suggested seem to be increased by the general impression that library boards are all more or less alike. It is easy even for trustees to fall into this way of thinking. They attend national or state library meetings and listen to general discussions of this subject without always investigating their own positions for themselves. When the actual provisions of statutes and charters are carefully studied, the results are sometimes rather surprising.

Another source of difficulty arises when the powers of library boards are stated in general rather than in specific terms. The use of broad and sweeping phrases, such as "exclusive control," "custody and management," "full power to manage," in laws or charters results in constant need of definition or interpretation, for expressions of this sort cannot mean the same thing in all places. The practice of stating the powers of the board more or less exactly has been followed rather generally throughout the country, although at least one state, Pennsylvania, has purposefully made the language of its library law general in this respect, in

<sup>21</sup> O. R. Barnett, "Proposed Revision of the Library Laws of Illinois," *Illinois Libraries*, XII (1930), 150-53.

order to retain as much power as possible in the hands of the boards. The actual list of specific powers necessary to provide complete "control" of the library is not great and may be stated rather simply. On the whole, it seems best to write these powers, or such of them as are desired, into the law or charter in order that all concerned may clearly understand the exact position of the board with relation to the city government.

It should be understood that the board may exercise its powers by deputy if it so desires. For instance, the stipulation that the board may "purchase necessary books . . . and other personal property" does not necessarily imply that it will exercise this power directly. It may, and usually does, authorize the librarian to perform this duty, retaining such degree of control or supervision as it may consider essential. Important decisions of a non-routine nature, of course, will ordinarily be reserved for decision by the board itself.

Following these general observations, we may now proceed to analyze in detail the powers possessed by library boards of various types, and the actual relation of the library to the city government. This general subject divides itself naturally into the following subdivisions, which will be discussed in the order named: (1) the place of the library in the city government, (2) questions of property rights and ownership, (3) the powers of the board in the erection of buildings and the renting of property, (4) its authority in the making of rules and regulations for the use of the library, (5) the control of library personnel, and (6) the taxing powers of library boards. This will be followed, in another section, by a general consideration of library revenues and of problems connected with the financial administration of municipal libraries managed by boards of trustees.

*Place of the library in the city government.*—The extent to which the municipal library really is, or is not, a part of the municipal government varies greatly from city to city. In most places the library, even though it may be managed by a board, is purely and simply a cog in the city machine and ordinarily does not consider itself to be anything else. On the other hand,

in a considerable number of cities there is no doubt that the library, for good or ill, is on a decidedly different basis from the regular city departments, and in some cases is clearly not a part of the city government at all.

Usually this situation is due to the separate corporate nature of the library board and to the broad powers granted it as a corporate body. Ordinarily, incorporation carries with it the rights of perpetual succession, to sue and be sued, to purchase and hold property, and to make rules and by-laws.<sup>22</sup> In nearly a fourth of the cities with over 30,000 population the library board is legally an incorporated body. There is no doubt that corporate status adds to the dignity and the prestige of the board, as well as to its actual powers of independent action. Mere incorporation, however, does not necessarily mean that the library is an "independent entity." In the New Jersey group of libraries, for example, the courts have held that the boards, though incorporated, are municipal in character and subject to city and state control.<sup>23</sup>

A few examples may perhaps serve to indicate in a more concrete way the status of some of these highly independent libraries. The St. Louis Public Library, organized under a law which in effect applies to it alone,<sup>24</sup> is an institution which has been declared to be of state concern, although it serves the city. Supported by a mandatory tax levy of two-fifths of a mill, which has been approved by a popular vote and strongly upheld by the courts,<sup>25</sup> it is, within the modest proceeds of this tax, independent of budgetary control by the city. It is not considered a city department, and therefore its staff is not subject to municipal civil service, and the Board is in complete control of salaries, grades of service, and vacations.

The Brooklyn Public Library and the Queens Borough Public

<sup>22</sup> Eugene McQuillin, *Law of Municipal Corporations* (2d ed.; Chicago, 1928) I, 361.

<sup>23</sup> *Free Public Library of Newark v. Civil Service Commission of New Jersey*, 83 N.J.L. 196 (1912); also same parties, 86 N.J.L. 307 (1914).

<sup>24</sup> Missouri, *Revised Statutes*, 1929, secs. 13473-78.

<sup>25</sup> *Carpenter v. St. Louis*, 2 S.W. (2d), 713 (1928); 318 Mo. 870 (1928).



Library, now practically alike in their organization, are curiously parts of the city and yet not of it. Both are incorporated by special acts of the legislature and both are giving service to the city of New York through "agreements" between their boards and the city government.<sup>26</sup> Aside from the fact that the boards of both libraries are appointed by the mayor rather than self-perpetuating, their status is quite like that of the New York Public Library, and they have stood upon their contractual rights fully as vigorously as has their sister-library.<sup>27</sup> The staffs of these libraries, like the staff of the circulation department of the New York Public Library, are not classed as municipal employees and are not subject to civil service, nor, unfortunately, eligible to municipal pensions.<sup>28</sup>

The Detroit Library Commission, likewise, is a corporation of extremely important independent powers, administering an institution legally distinct from the city government.<sup>29</sup> The Boston Public Library, although styled by ordinance a city "department," is under its special act of 1878 a municipal corporation of extensive power, holding the library property in its own right and greatly different in its control from the rest of the city government.<sup>30</sup> Other interesting examples, including Louisville and various smaller cities, might be cited.

In spite of the extensive powers of all the libraries mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs, and their more or less technical separation from the city government, it is easy to show that all of them are in important respects subject to municipal control. All are required to report annually to the mayor or governing body of their respective cities. Except in St. Louis, the whole

<sup>26</sup> For Queens Borough agreement see *Statutes and Agreements Governing the Administration of the Queens Borough Public Library* (no date), pp. 25-30.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32-36; *Brooklyn Public Library v. Craig, City Comptroller*, 194 N.Y. Supp. 715 (1922); *Brooklyn Public Library v. New York*, 226 N.Y. Supp. 491 (1928).

<sup>28</sup> "United Staff Associations Dinner," *Library Journal*, LIX (1934), 400.

<sup>29</sup> *Attorney General v. Thompson*, 168 Mich. 511 (1912); MS opinion of Wayne Co. corporation counsel, May 15, 1933.

<sup>30</sup> Boston, *Revised Ordinances of 1914* (13th rev.; Boston, 1915), chap. 21, pp. 33-34; Massachusetts, *Acts and Resolves*, 1878, chap. 114.



life of the libraries depends on the appropriations for their support made by the city councils, and budgetary control by the city is vigorously exercised as an administrative measure. The exact line-for-line budgets under which the libraries of Brooklyn, Queens, and Detroit are operated mean very close supervision at every point. Finally, in all except Detroit<sup>31</sup> the board is appointed by the mayor, who takes an active interest in the appointments made.<sup>32</sup>

Even though the library may be legally a department of the city, a considerable degree of independent administration may be developed as a matter of custom. A most interesting example of this sort, the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, deserves attention because of its unusual features and its excellent results. This library is much more comparable in its organization and operation to a university library than it is to a city department. It is governed by a joint board of eighteen trustees, half self-perpetuating and half *ex officio*. These eighteen trustees, in turn, are all members of the Board of Trustees of Carnegie Institute, a unique organization which includes the Carnegie Institute of Technology (a technical college), the Carnegie Museum, the Carnegie Music Hall, the Department of Fine Arts, and the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. The president of the Institute is the president of the library board.

Very much as is the case in a university or college, the building department of the Institute assumes full control of the operation and upkeep of all library buildings, and the auditor of the Institute issues warrants and makes all payments for the library. The library itself, however, does its own purchasing and keeps its own detailed accounts. Funds appropriated by the city, which constitute the main source of library income, are turned over to the library regularly and deposited to its credit in its own depository. The library maintains full control over staff appointments and salaries. Again, its educational connec-

<sup>31</sup> Appointed by Board of Education.

<sup>32</sup> Since his election Mayor La Guardia has been active in making appointments to the Brooklyn and Queens Borough boards.

tion results in the maintenance of high standards of qualifications and fitness for its personnel. As a whole, the Pittsburgh plan is an example of the successful application of an unusual and by no means typical form of library organization and management.

It is perhaps situations such as those described above which have led some observers to include libraries among governmental activities organized as special districts or "disguised special districts."<sup>33</sup> That such a designation is fair up to a certain point when applied to some libraries cannot be denied. But it will be seen, as we proceed to analyze the powers of municipal library boards in further detail, that such a characterization cannot fairly be applied to all libraries as a group, without numerous and detailed exceptions.

*Property rights and ownership.*—As a general rule, title to the property of municipal libraries—land, physical plant, and books—is vested in the city and not in the library board. In the cases in which the board itself holds title to library property,<sup>34</sup> it is usually either a corporation or a body acting in a fiduciary capacity, holding property which has been donated to the library. Even in the case of corporate boards, title to the property is commonly held by the city rather than by the board.<sup>35</sup>

A large majority of the library boards are empowered to receive gifts and donations and many retain title to such property or trust funds in their own right, even when the bulk of the library property is held by the city. Property rights in these municipal libraries are apparently less jealously guarded than in the case of the private corporation libraries described in chapter iii.<sup>36</sup> After all, it is perhaps not a matter of vital concern; the books and buildings are actually all public property, and it is relatively unimportant whether they belong to the city itself or to some other public corporation.

<sup>33</sup> K. H. Porter, "A Plague of Special Districts," *National Municipal Review*, XXII (1933), 544-47, 574; F. H. Guild, "Special Municipal Corporations," *ibid.*, XVIII (1929), 319-23.

<sup>34</sup> Nineteen instances in cities of 30,000 or over.

<sup>35</sup> Thirty instances in the 30,000 group.

<sup>36</sup> See pp. 96-97.

*Erection of buildings; rentals.*—The question of whether the library board may, in its own right and without recourse to higher authority, purchase land and erect buildings usually marks the dividing line between the boards which have practically complete powers of library control and those whose powers are more limited. In a rather large number of libraries this point is not specifically covered by the legal instruments under which the library is organized and often, therefore, is in doubt until an actual test is made. Slightly more than half of the municipal library boards possess these two important powers; the remainder either do not or are in doubt about the matter.<sup>37</sup>

The fact that the library board has authority to purchase land and erect buildings does not necessarily imply that it has the right to provide the funds for these purposes. The point is that, when funds are available, the board may undertake the necessary work directly under its own authority and not indirectly through the city government. If funds are to be provided through a bond issue or special tax, then the project must be authorized by popular referendum, or by the city council, or in general by whatever method the city itself is empowered to float bonds. In Indiana<sup>38</sup> municipal library boards may issue bonds, subject to council approval. In Kentucky<sup>39</sup> boards of first class cities (Louisville only) may themselves issue bonds. In a few instances boards have authority to submit the question of bond issues to a popular referendum at an election.<sup>40</sup> There seems little question that the power to issue bonds for library buildings should be left in the hands of the people or of the city government.

The right to proceed independently in carrying out building

<sup>37</sup> Data for cities over 30,000: *purchase sites*: yes, 96; no, 78; *uncertain*, 25; *erect buildings*: yes, 104; no, 72; *uncertain*, 23.

<sup>38</sup> Burns' *Annotated Indiana Statutes, Supplement*, 1929, sec. 9668.

<sup>39</sup> Carroll's *Kentucky Statutes Annotated*, 1930, secs. 2801b-9, 2801b-10.

<sup>40</sup> Ohio, any library board, *Throckmorton's 1930 Annotated Code of Ohio*, secs. 4007-18; Illinois, township libraries, *Cahill's Illinois Revised Statutes*, 1933, chap. 81, par. 43; California, unincorporated towns or villages, *General Laws of California*, 1931 (Deering), Act 2751, secs. 28-33.

programs is frankly cherished by many library boards and librarians. When the board possesses no powers of its own in this connection, the project must be carried forward by negotiation with the council and the city authorities. At best, such negotiations are often difficult. At each successive step, from the selection of a site and the appointment of the architect to the letting of contracts and the final approval of the finished building, council approval must be secured and final action is always taken by the city. Unless both parties proceed with much tact, differences of opinion may develop and other difficulties may be encountered. The best results are likely to be achieved when the council makes the library board fully responsible for all decisions and for the general execution of the project in detail, reserving only final approval for itself.

In making leases for quarters for branches or for other purposes, more than three-fourths of the library boards have full power to act on their own initiative. The remainder, as in the case of the erection of buildings, must secure council approval and the city must actually execute the necessary leases.<sup>41</sup>

*Rules and regulations for the use of the library.*—It is a weak library board indeed which does not have power to make rules and regulations for the use of the library. When it is permitted to do practically nothing else, it is still given power to legislate on this subject. In three or four isolated cases, council control over the library is so complete that it has been extended even to this point. The rules adopted by the board are, of course, nearly always based on recommendations of the librarian; nevertheless the power of final decision on the many matters concerned with the use of the library and its contents is by no means insignificant and should not be underestimated. Especially important are the decisions made by the board concerning the conditions under which the library may be used by residents of other governmental units.

*Control of library personnel.*—The status of the librarian as a civil servant might well be made the subject of a monograph of

<sup>41</sup> Data for cities of over 30,000: *may lease directly*, 145; *may not*, 41; *uncertain*, 13.



some size. Here it will be considered briefly from the point of view of the authority of the library board over the personnel of the library. This has been the scene of many major conflicts and is a question vitally related to the real success of the library.

Complete control over the appointment of librarian and staff and over salary schedules for the staff is generally considered an essential prerogative of the board; these powers are repeated over and over again in the library laws of the various states. Certainly if the board has no authority over the appointment of the librarian and the library staff, one of the principal reasons for its existence disappears. Along with the power to make appointments may be included authority to create positions, to establish grades or schemes of library service, and to make promotions from grade to grade. Only about a dozen examples of exceptions to the appointing power of the board are to be noted. A gap of this sort in the board's powers is a significant symbol of weakness.

Somewhat more frequently the board may not fix the salaries of the library staff because this power is vested in the governing body of the city. In such instances the board may only recommend salary rates to the city council, and no change may be made without formal action by that body. Often such approval is a mere form, but sometimes differences of opinion occur. In some cities, even though the board may legally be vested with power to fix salaries, the council, through the medium of a line-for-line budget, actually determines what salaries shall be paid.<sup>42</sup> In view of the extremely modest salary schedules generally prevailing in the public library field, it seems entirely reasonable and safe to intrust the library board with the power of fixing rates of compensation.

Civil service relationships among American public libraries have developed in a manner curiously different from the basic objectives of the system. Instead of being considered a measure of reform and a desirable protection against the spoils system, civil service has quite generally been regarded by libra-

<sup>42</sup> As in Detroit, for instance.



ries as an administrative handicap to be avoided at all costs. Whenever civil service does apply to libraries, either as a municipal or as a state affair, it is, of course, a serious limitation on the appointing power of the library board. Among the 204 municipal libraries in cities of over 30,000 population, civil service rules apply wholly or in large part in 22 instances,<sup>43</sup> including such large cities as Chicago, Los Angeles (except for executives), San Francisco, Oakland, and Milwaukee. State civil service, it may also be noted, applies to janitors and building employees in Massachusetts public libraries, where it has proved a source of considerable difficulty.

Some libraries have adjusted themselves to the requirements of civil service in a fairly satisfactory manner. In a few there is little doubt that the system has saved the library from the intrusion of partisan or local politics, or even board politics. But most libraries have found civil service cumbersome and difficult and would gladly be rid of it. The worst results have been in those cities where a rigid provision for local residence has been made a part of the system.

The way out, both from the evils of civil service itself and from the evils resulting from the lack of it, seems to lie in the direction of the certification of librarians on a plan similar to that generally required for teachers. The success of certification schemes in New York and Wisconsin is sufficient evidence of the soundness of this conclusion. It is clear, however, that in some cases certification and civil service are duplicating each other. This is already true in a group of New York cities where the library staffs are now under civil service and must also be certified under the regulations of the State Education Department. This situation is likely to develop elsewhere as certification schemes are more widely adopted. A thoroughgoing system of certification should in every way be a satisfactory substitute for civil service, and city civil service commissions should be willing to accept it as such, whenever they are permitted to do so.

*Taxing powers of library boards.*—The power to levy a special

<sup>43</sup> Also in two cities in the city-department group (St. Paul and Long Beach).

tax for library purposes is conspicuously lacking in the great majority of library boards. In no city of over 30,000 population has the library board at the present time unqualified power to levy such a tax.

Even among smaller cities and towns this power of taxation is relatively uncommon and unimportant. Except in a rather small group of libraries, the actual power of levying a library tax, or of making appropriations for library purposes, is generally vested in the governing body of the city or town. In the few instances where this is not the case, the rate has been determined, as we have already seen, by a popular referendum.<sup>44</sup>

This question of the taxing powers of library boards is one of much importance and has been the occasion for a considerable amount of misunderstanding. It is therefore worth while to note in detail the small number of instances in which the power to levy a special tax is vested in the library board.

The Indiana municipal library law is the most important example in this connection. This law provides that the library board in any city or incorporated town shall "determine the rate of taxation" for library purposes and "certify" it to the council or town board and the county auditor.<sup>45</sup> It is important to note that the tax rate set by the board may not exceed one mill on the dollar of assessed valuation. Under the provisions of recent legislation the levy so certified now goes before the County Tax Adjustment Board and may be reduced by that body, although appeal may be made to the State Tax Commission.<sup>46</sup> Thus, although the Indiana law was once important in that it permitted the library board to levy a tax of fairly liberal amount, it may now be said that the library board's power in this respect amounts only to a recommendation.

In Kansas the library law provides that the governing body of the city "shall" levy whatever tax rate for library purposes is "designated" by the library board. The limits for the tax designated vary from fifteen-hundredths mill to one mill, according to

<sup>44</sup> See above, p. 199.

<sup>45</sup> *Burns' Annotated Indiana Statutes*, 1926, sec. 9669.

<sup>46</sup> *Indiana, Laws*, 1933, chap. 237, sec. 4, pp. 1086-90.

the size of the city.<sup>47</sup> Although the attorney-general and several courts have ruled<sup>48</sup> that the tax is mandatory and must be levied as requested by the board, the law is in fact only partially observed.<sup>49</sup> At best, the limitations of the tax are such that the power vested in the library boards is not of great importance.

In South Dakota, likewise, the library board is required to "certify" a "careful estimate" of the necessary expenses of the library to the governing body of the municipal unit, which must then "include such expense in the regular tax levy." The library rate must not exceed two mills on the dollar.<sup>50</sup> Frequent rulings of the attorney-general have held this tax to be mandatory,<sup>51</sup> but a case has never been brought before the courts. However, in Sioux Falls, the largest city in the state, the law has never been observed, and the public library is supported by an appropriation rather than by a special tax levy.

In Kentucky the similar provision of the state library law, applying to all cities and towns except the six largest cities in the state,<sup>52</sup> has been very generally enforced and has frankly been of great advantage to the libraries. The rate fixed by this law is limited to one mill on the dollar. South Carolina also has a provision of the same general type in its state library law for county, city, and township libraries.<sup>53</sup> The libraries in the three largest cities of the state are not organized under this particular law, and it seems to apply to very few places. Finally, Michigan township and village library boards are authorized to certify

<sup>47</sup> Kansas, *1933 Supplement to Revised Statutes of 1923*, secs. 12-1201, 79-1948 to 79-1953.

<sup>48</sup> Letter of attorney-general to state librarian, October 26, 1928; decision of Circuit Court *re* Cherryvale, September 8, 1922.

<sup>49</sup> City attorney in Wichita has advised City Commission that it may reduce the levy named by the library board; Topeka Commission also does not levy full amount of tax.

<sup>50</sup> South Dakota, *Compiled Laws*, 1929, secs. 9937, 9939.

<sup>51</sup> Attorney-general, *Biennial Report*, 1913-14, p. 75; 1917-18, p. 132; 1923-24, p. 224; 1927-28, pp. 117-18; 1931-32, pp. 479-80.

<sup>52</sup> *Carroll's Kentucky Statutes*, 1930, sec. 2741d-3.

<sup>53</sup> South Carolina, *Code*, 1922, secs. 4482, 4485.

estimates to the taxing authorities, which are directed to spread a library tax up to a limit of one mill. The net effect of this provision has been slight.<sup>54</sup>

Summarizing, it is easy to see that although laws conferring tax-levying powers on library boards in certain classes of libraries are found on the statute-books of six states, they are as a whole relatively unimportant and actually affect a group of libraries of rather small size. In view of the prevailing sentiment among authorities on government and public finance against specific mill taxes in general, it is highly unlikely that the power of library boards to levy a tax in their own right will ever attain great importance. It is possible to defend this power of taxation by pointing out that it is not unreasonable when the amount which may be levied is limited, as it is in all the states mentioned. But the idea is so much out of line with modern trends in public finance that it is scarcely worth while to attempt to perpetuate the system.

#### LIBRARY REVENUES AND FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION

*Library tax levies and appropriations.*—The income of municipal libraries from public funds is ordinarily derived from one of two sources: (1) from a special library mill tax on property and (2) from an appropriation from the general funds of the municipality. Although either of these methods may be defined broadly as an appropriation, that term will be used in this discussion to apply only to the second method, in which a certain sum of money, not derived from a special library tax, is set aside by the governing body of the municipality for the use of the library. In view of the present severe criticism of special taxes of all kinds, including library taxes, particular attention must be given to the extent to which the special tax levy for municipal libraries actually exists and to the conditions under which it applies.

Table X shows the number of cities of over 30,000 population which levy a special property tax for the support of municipal libraries.

<sup>54</sup> Michigan, *Compiled Laws*, 1929, sec. 8068.

The remaining libraries in the municipal group are supported by the appropriation method. If to the 86 municipal libraries we add the 17 libraries in other classes which are thus supported,<sup>55</sup> we reach a total of 103 libraries with special tax levies, or almost exactly one-third of all the cities in the 30,000 group. Among the smaller cities, towns, and villages, it is probable that the proportion supported by tax levies is somewhat greater, owing to the prevalence of this method in the Middle West.<sup>56</sup> On the

TABLE X

SPECIAL LIBRARY TAXES FOR MUNICIPAL LIBRARIES  
IN CITIES OF OVER 30,000 POPULATION

| Type of Tax                                      | Number of Libraries |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Fixed minimum, no maximum . . . . .              | 6                   |
| Fixed minimum and fixed maximum . . . . .        | 14                  |
| Fixed maximum, no minimum . . . . .              | 41                  |
| Fixed levy (not variable)* . . . . .             | 9                   |
| Indefinite (no minimum and no maximum) . . . . . | 14                  |
| Unclassified . . . . .                           | 2                   |
| <hr/>                                            |                     |
| Total . . . . .                                  | 86                  |

\* Including four cases in which amount is fixed by popular vote.

other hand, the appropriation plan is followed almost exclusively among the numerous local libraries of New England.

But the mere listing of this rather large number of libraries which derive their support from special taxes does not mean that in all of these cities the municipal authorities are helpless in the hands of a vicious system which prevents them from exercising any discretion in the determination of the amount to be devoted to the support of libraries. A little reflection will make it clear that the tax-levying authorities are powerless in this respect only when the minimum is definitely fixed, or when the rate is specifically set at an unvariable amount, a situation which is found in only 29 of the 86 municipal libraries supported by tax levies.

<sup>55</sup> Made up as follows: three city-department libraries, six school-district libraries, eight corporation and association libraries.

<sup>56</sup> Particularly in Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa.



In all other cases the power of the city to determine the library tax rate is unimpaired. In not a few instances in which there is a low maximum levy or a low fixed levy, the city may actually be unable to give the library as much as it might desire unless it makes an appropriation additional to the tax levy. It is fair to say, therefore, that the tax levy, in two-thirds of the cities in which it is found, may become to all intents and purposes a mere appropriation of a more or less definitely determined amount. That it is so considered may readily be seen by the fact that the tax rate is often nicely calculated to produce a certain exact sum. Fixing the rate at a fraction, such as 0.23188 mills, obviously means that the council intends that rate, when applied to the assessment roll, to produce a definite sum.

This point may be carried one step farther. Even when there is a fixed minimum rate, or when an invariable rate is named, the library is in a preferred position only when the rate so established is high. As library taxes go, minimum rates of one-third of a mill, or up to one-half of a mill, are certainly not high and ordinarily do not produce a large per capita revenue for the library. Scrutiny of the tax requirements in the cities which have fixed minimum library taxes shows that in only three instances is the minimum required by law over half a mill.<sup>57</sup> To this number might be added four cases in which a rate in excess of half a mill has been fixed by popular referendum.<sup>58</sup> This latter condition also prevails rather largely among municipal units other than cities in Illinois, in which the referendum method has been widely employed, and to some extent is a few other states.<sup>59</sup> In this group a growing tendency to disregard the popular referendum is to be noted.

When the library tax is over and above the limit set for other municipal taxes, the position of the library compared with other activities of the city is somewhat preferred in that the amount allowed the library is not directly in competition with allot-

<sup>57</sup> Los Angeles, 0.7 mill; Tacoma, 1.0 mill; Alameda, 0.7 mill.

<sup>58</sup> Cicero, Elgin, Oak Park, Ill.; Springfield, Mo. (Not observed in Cicero.)

<sup>59</sup> See above, p. 199.

ments for other purposes. Under normal financial conditions, there is then no necessity for keeping down the library tax rate. However, the council still possesses the power to set the rate at any amount it desires. As a nation-wide matter, we may safely conclude that the special mill tax on property for library purposes does not in practice seriously limit the determination by the governing body of the city of the amount to be devoted to library support. Among the larger cities of the country, Los Angeles is the only one in which the library is in a preferential position due to a high minimum tax rate, and there the rate is certainly not excessive and has been approved by the people through the adoption of a charter amendment. Among cities of over 30,000 population such situations are rare, and in smaller places they are mostly due to the vote of the people themselves.

Of special interest to library authorities is the question as to whether the tax rate or the appropriation is likely to be the most productive method of library support. If results up to 1930 only are considered, libraries supported by special tax rates fared better than those whose funds came from appropriations. In that year the tax-supported municipal libraries in the 30,000-population group received on the average 2.0 per cent of the operating revenues of their cities, while the average proportion in libraries supported by appropriations was but 1.3 per cent.<sup>60</sup> This mass average bears out the strong feeling among library trustees and executives that the earmarked tax levy is the most satisfactory means of library support. That the results have been generally good from the library point of view is perhaps due fully as much to the powerful indorsement this system has had among the relatively strong groups of libraries which have favored this method of support as it is to the method itself.

But in spite of this history, the future of the special library tax is likely to present many difficulties. It was eminently well suited to a period of steadily rising assessment rolls. In a day of falling valuations it may instead prove a trap from which escape

<sup>60</sup> Based on a compilation from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Financial Statistics of Cities Having a Population of over 30,000*, 1930.

is difficult. With sweeping changes in the whole tax system in prospect, librarians themselves are beginning to lose confidence to some extent in this type of support and are looking for other sources of revenue. Naturally, those libraries which are advantageously situated by reason of special levies are unlikely to yield to change until they see clear and definite security of income in new methods which may be suggested.

In this connection it is in point to observe that the special library tax is based on the wealth of the community rather than on the actual need for library service. Other things being equal, the wealthy community may obtain excellent library service rather easily, and the poor community, unless willing to make great sacrifices, inevitably receives a lesser amount of service. As a principle on which to base support of libraries, the property tax has little to commend it. More logical as a principle, perhaps, would be appropriations or tax levies based on a minimum amount per capita—a method which has been extensively followed in Ontario<sup>61</sup> but not at all in the United States.<sup>62</sup> Further use of this method is likely to be seen in this country.

Practice in the granting of appropriations to libraries by city councils is almost evenly divided between the lump-sum appropriation and the segregated appropriation. Libraries have naturally preferred the former method, but with more exact and scientific municipal budgeting the trend toward segregation seems well established. When segregation is confined to a few major categories, with transfers freely allowed within these broad groups, little difficulty is experienced. But the line-for-line budget, with every item strictly allocated for a specific purpose, presents as many difficulties for libraries as it does for other municipal departments.

*Budget procedure.*—The library budget ordinarily passes through the usual channels of budgetary procedure of the city government, from librarian to board to appropriating authority.

<sup>61</sup> *Revised Statutes of Ontario*, 1927, chap. 246, sec. 39.

<sup>62</sup> Michigan regional library law contains this provision, but no libraries are as yet organized under its provisions (*Public Acts*, 1931, No. 250, sec. 6).

In about twenty cities it is not presented to the council for revision, although sometimes transmitted for information only. Nearly always this situation is found in cities in which there is a library tax. Sometimes this tax is so fixed by law or by popular vote as to make change impossible, and consideration of the budget in detail is therefore unnecessary. In other cases consideration is confined to the amount of the tax levy and does not affect the budget in detail.

In about half the cities of over 30,000 population the budget is reviewed by the mayor, the city manager, or other authorities, as well as by the council. The authority of the manager with respect to the budget is merely one instance of the growing power of that official. He naturally has the power of revision of budgets submitted by boards which he himself appoints.<sup>63</sup> There is also evident a growing tendency for him to be given authority, or for him to assume it, to make recommendations concerning budgets which are submitted by library boards over which he has no direct administrative control.

*Purchasing.*—The field of library purchasing is gradually becoming a battle-ground between the separatist tendencies of library administration and the growing centralization of municipal functions. Already in more than thirty cities all or part of the library's purchasing must be done through a centralized municipal purchasing department. In half of these cities all purchases are made through the central office; in the others the library usually retains the power to purchase books directly, and sometimes special library equipment as well.<sup>64</sup> In spite of this tendency, more than 80 per cent of the municipal libraries still retain full power to do all their own purchasing. Sometimes this independence is due to the provisions of law; in other cases it is merely a matter of custom.

When the purchasing of a library is first put under the direction of a central purchasing department, there is usually a peri-

<sup>63</sup> Five instances in cities of over 30,000 (see p. 184).

<sup>64</sup> Seventeen cities require all purchases to be made through a central office; sixteen others require part of the purchases to be made in this manner.



od of much difficulty and friction while a *modus operandi* is being established. Gradually, if there is a reasonable amount of willingness to compromise, sufficient adjustments are made by both city and library to make the situation at least tolerable.

Constructive and logical consideration of the methods and problems of municipal purchasing as they affect libraries is much needed, both by purchasing agents and by library authorities. There is ample room for mutual concessions and adjustments on both sides. In the first place, it is evident that, outside of the field of books, periodicals, and binding, the library is ordinarily a relatively small purchaser. In the purchasing of books and periodicals and in the evaluation of binding contracts, the librarian surely should be the city's real expert. It is unlikely that a central purchasing office can be of much assistance to the library in this field. On the other hand, the city purchasing department ought to be able to make advantageous purchases of fuel, electric-light bulbs, certain commonly used building supplies, and perhaps standard office supplies. In this general field the library should be willing to co-operate in purchasing, even when not legally required to do so.

There remains the difficult question of the purchase of special library furniture and equipment and of technical library supplies. In this field the library prefers to purchase independently, and there is apparently little to be gained by centralized purchasing.

*Control of library funds.*—The municipal libraries are generally not independent and self-contained fiscal agencies, as was found to be the case in many of the corporation libraries<sup>65</sup> and in the school-district libraries of Ohio, for example.<sup>66</sup> As a rule, the funds allotted to them are held in custody of the city treasurer, although trust funds are frequently retained by the board in its own hands. Usually the amount standing to the credit of the library is formally designated as the "library fund." The power of the library board to make expenditures from this fund is near-

<sup>65</sup> See p. 100.

<sup>66</sup> See pp. 128-29.



ly always absolute and complete, within budgetary limitations. In this respect the board is subject to higher authority in only about ten cities in which it has very limited powers and in three other places in which it is appointed by the city manager. Authority for payment must often be shown by the signature of the city auditor or controller on vouchers and warrants, but almost invariably this is required only as evidence that funds are available within the proper budget allotments—not as authority for determining the nature of the purchase.

Exceptions to the general practice noted above are found in a number of cities where library funds are turned over by the city to the treasurer of the library board and are deposited by him in the library's own bank, exactly as was found to be the custom in libraries of the corporation type. This method is followed in Brooklyn, Queens Borough, Pittsburgh, and in some smaller libraries, in which the library board often is a corporate body.<sup>67</sup>

In the payment of bills and claims against the library, in the majority of cities the library assumes responsibility for the complete routine of payment, preparing both the necessary vouchers and the accompanying warrants or checks.<sup>68</sup> In about one-fourth of the larger cities the city auditor or other accounting officer is in charge of the entire process, while in a group of similar size the city makes payments on the "properly authenticated vouchers of the library board."<sup>69</sup>

*Accounting.*—Relations between the city government and the library with reference to the accounting system present some rather serious difficulties. It is a matter for regret that in about half of the libraries in the municipal group it seems necessary for both library and city to keep more or less detailed accounts. Equally unfortunate is the fact that the library in following the scheme of classification of expenditures of the municipality (which it generally does) is using a system often quite unlike the

<sup>67</sup> Twenty-eight cases in the 30,000 group.

<sup>68</sup> Eighty-three cases in the 30,000 group.

<sup>69</sup> Fifty examples in each group. Phrase quoted is from the Illinois library law, *Cahill's Illinois Revised Statutes*, 1933, chap. 81, par. 5, and is widely copied.

standard expenditure classification approved by the American Library Association,<sup>70</sup> the only form which makes detailed comparison of expenditures among libraries generally possible. It is very clear that the possibilities of saving through centralized bookkeeping and payment have not been realized to any great extent. There is much duplication of effort in the various processes involved, and further study of the methods used should be undertaken.

From the point of view of total cost of library accounting to the taxpayers of the city, duplication is unfortunate and should be avoided whenever possible. Apparently the library needs its accounts at hand for ready reference in the daily course of its administration. If the municipal routine makes it impossible to consider the library's accounts as the final official record, it might be feasible for the city accounting department to detail one of its employees as library accountant, to be on duty at the library for as much time as necessary. Such a system would provide accessibility of records for the benefit of the library and uniformity and accuracy for the benefit of the city accounting department.

#### CLASSIFICATION OF LIBRARY BOARDS ACCORDING TO POWERS

The foregoing survey of the powers of the library board has necessarily been generalized. Any attempt at a minute and wholly logical classification of municipal libraries based on the powers of the boards, or on the independence of the library with respect to the rest of the city government, is practically impossible because of the great variation in details. However, it is possible, without attempting too great precision, to classify the library boards discussed in this chapter in three main groups, as follows:

1. *Strong boards*.—These have broad powers and a high degree of independence in the administration of the library.

<sup>70</sup> Data from cities of the 30,000 class: cities in which both library and city keep accounts, 78; cities in which the library alone keeps accounts, 85; cities in which the city alone keeps accounts, 10; municipal classification of accounts not followed in 50 cities.

2. *Boards with limited powers.*—The independence of these boards is restricted in important particulars by the powers of other municipal authorities, and their functions are to a corresponding extent involved in the administrative processes of the city government as a whole.

3. *Weak boards.*—The control exercised by these boards is largely nominal, and the functions of the library are therefore almost completely absorbed in the activities of the city government.

A brief statement regarding each of the types listed above, illustrated by concrete examples, is next in order.

*Strong boards.*—Of course, it is easily understood that what we have here called the “strength” of the library board is much more than a matter of law. Some boards which on paper, at least, are strong and powerful prove on scrutiny to be surprisingly weak. Others whose powers are legally greatly limited are strong in actual operation. Real strength in a library board must be based on a combination of adequate and unassailable legal powers and personal strength and influence of its membership.

Approximately one-half of the two hundred municipal libraries in cities of over 30,000 population considered in this chapter may be included in the group of libraries administered by strong boards. Among the cities of over 200,000 population, two-thirds of the libraries may be classified in this group. All the libraries cited earlier in the chapter as examples of marked independence from the city government are of course included here, and in addition most of the important state groups of libraries, organized under uniform legislation, must also be included. Several of these state groups are of such importance that they merit brief mention as examples.

The Indiana type of municipal library is certainly one of the most carefully planned attempts at independence found anywhere among American libraries. It may fairly be described as an effort to create an almost wholly self-sufficient unit, literally an *imperium in imperio*. Although not legally designated as a

corporation by the statute creating it, the board is empowered to purchase real estate, to construct and equip buildings, and in general has absolutely complete power to manage the affairs of the library and to control the staff. Its appointment by three authorities—county judge, board of education, and city council—makes it only in part dependent on the city government. Although its taxing powers are now subject to revision by the County Board of Tax Adjustment, it is not compelled to present its budget to the council. The only weak spot in the armor of the board is the fact that its members are appointed only for a two-year term. All in all, the Indiana board is a very independent body, which manages in its own way a library which serves the city yet is only to a small extent controlled by the city.<sup>71</sup>

In the Illinois group of city libraries, on the contrary, the library board is powerful but remains clearly a part of the municipal framework. Its members are all appointed by the council, and the council also determines the tax rate levied for library purposes. In the actual administration of the library, including the purchase of sites and the erection of buildings, the board, however, is the supreme authority and has very broad powers.

In Wisconsin, although a home-rule state, the uniform system of public libraries has not as yet been seriously invaded. The libraries are governed by a state library law, which gives the library board important powers in the management of the libraries. But the boards themselves, in commission and manager cities, may be abolished at any time at the will of the council, and their position is therefore much less secure than in many other states.<sup>72</sup> The council also has discretion in supporting the library by a special tax or by an appropriation, as it chooses. In spite of these variations, the Wisconsin library boards are a strong and influential group.

The New Jersey municipal library boards are organized as corporate bodies and have ample powers in the administration of the libraries they control. Through ex officio membership of

<sup>71</sup> See pp. 182-83.

<sup>72</sup> Wisconsin, *Statutes*, 1931, secs. 63.12, 64.10.



the mayor and the superintendent of schools, they are connected with the city government and with the school district. A variety of general state laws regarding municipal government and finance has to some extent affected the administration of the libraries, and under the commission and manager laws of the state the boards may, as in Wisconsin, be dropped at any time.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to these state groups many examples of strong boards in individual cities might be cited. Among these the following may be mentioned: Bethlehem, Bridgeport, Denver, Grand Rapids, Manchester, Minneapolis, Port Huron, Poughkeepsie, Salt Lake City, Utica, and Williamsport.

*Boards with limited powers.*—Turning next to boards whose powers are considerably limited, the general statement may be made that such limitations are usually imposed by the provisions of home-rule charters or are found in states in which the general library law is not greatly detailed. The principal directions in which independence of control in such libraries has been lost are: (1) to the growing power of the city manager as an administrative officer, (2) to increasingly strict fiscal control through budgetary and purchasing regulations, and (3) to civil service or other means of personnel control.

This group contains nearly as many libraries as are found in the group managed by strong library boards. Almost any city whose municipal government is determined by a home-rule charter is likely to afford an example of this type of board. As a general rule such charters have been strongly influenced by the modern emphasis on centralized administration. The old-style library board, exercising more or less autonomous powers in the conduct of its affairs, does not fit well into such a scheme. Its very retention is a compromise between the old and the new, and inevitably the powers of the board have suffered considerably. The possibilities for variation are so great that libraries can scarcely be considered in groups, and a single example must suffice.

The charter of the city of Berkeley, California, provides that

<sup>73</sup> See p. 156.



there shall be a library board of five members who shall have power to "manage" the library and appoint the staff.<sup>74</sup> It also provides for a library tax of unspecified rate and that the board shall have full control over expenditures from the proceeds of this tax. Under provisions as general and vague as these, it follows that the powers of the library board must of necessity be restricted in many particulars. The following specific limitations may be noted: Its tenure of office is limited, and its members serve at the pleasure of the council; it cannot fix the number of staff members, or their grades or salaries; it cannot purchase or lease property or erect buildings. In spite of these gaps in its powers, there is little doubt that the board in this city really does manage the library. There is to be noted, however, a steadily growing tendency on the part of the city manager to assume more authority over the budget and expenditures of the library—this in spite of the fact that the library is not placed by the charter under his control. In a situation such as this, the library board ordinarily does about what it desires under normal conditions; at any time, however, the council has ample authority to restrict its powers materially.

In addition to Berkeley, this group contains a number of home-rule charter cities in California, New York, and other states. A considerable number of Massachusetts libraries may also be classed here, since they are in general rather closely related to the municipal government.

*Weak boards.*—The third and last group, that in which the powers of the board have shrunk almost to the vanishing-point, is small in number and need not be considered at length.<sup>75</sup> The group contains two excellent public libraries<sup>76</sup> which were originally established in the days of strong library boards. In these cities the actual powers of the board have been gradually whittled down by successive charter changes, but to a consider-

<sup>74</sup> Berkeley, *Charter*, 1923, sec. 30.

<sup>75</sup> Probably eight libraries in the 30,000 group may fairly be classified here.

<sup>76</sup> Pasadena and San Diego.

able degree the tradition of the board's authority has been retained, although its powers on paper are now almost entirely nominal. In a third city,<sup>77</sup> of the commission type, the library board was for a long time non-existent but has recently been restored in greatly modified form. The other examples in this group include several cities in which the public library is still in a rudimentary state of development and is not under vigorous control, either of the city government or of the library board.

Most of these libraries are "neither fish, flesh, nor fowl" as far as their organization is concerned. There is little doubt that some of them badly need the vigorous backing and support which a strong board might give them. Either the powers of the boards should be made entirely advisory or else they should be strengthened to a degree in which their responsibility and authority are more in keeping with their apparent powers.

#### CONCLUSION

Any attempt at an appraisal of the general success of the board system of library management is reserved for the succeeding chapter, after an examination of the board's personnel and its methods of work has been made. Here we need only attempt to summarize briefly the results of the survey of the powers and functions of library boards as made in the present chapter.

It is abundantly clear that there is no single pattern for the library board. Some boards have much power; others have some power; still others have practically no power—yet all are labeled library boards. Generalizations are therefore impossible and even dangerous.

It is true that the library board, next to the school board, is the most common board in American municipal government. But this similarity in frequency should not lead to the bracketing of the school board and the library board with respect to their powers and legal position. The school board is an administrative authority in charge of a special district which is almost invariably a separate governmental unit; it is essentially a state

<sup>77</sup> Duluth.

board rather than a local board. On the other hand, the library board is not only less powerful in its actual functions, but it is much more positively a part of the local governmental structure, and does not administer a special district.

*Much or little power for the library board?*—Assuming that the library board is to be retained as the administrative body in charge of public library service in local government, the real issue centers about the amount of power which it should possess. Disregarding details for the moment, should this power be great or small? No categorical answer to this question is possible. In the background lies the much broader question of the fundamental philosophy of the organization and administration of local government, and the reply made to the question depends in large measure on the school of thought to which each particular critic adheres.

To the writer this question appears to belong in the class of governmental problems in which compromise is not desirable. Assuming that there is to be a library board at all, its strength should be sufficient to enable it to function with real authority. Responsibility without adequate power is not a satisfactory basis for the conduct of public affairs of any sort. When the two are not combined, administrative difficulties are almost certain to arise; further, under such conditions it is not easy to interest the best type of citizen in the post of library trustee. All in all, the best answer seems to be: If the library board is retained, do not emasculate it.

If the foregoing judgment is correct, the corollary is that boards with extremely limited powers should either be frankly reduced to a purely advisory level or be elevated to a position of reasonable power. Board members placed in either of these positions will know where they stand and should be able to work out a satisfactory general plan of action.

To attempt to make any precise correlation between the strength or weakness of the library board and the general effectiveness of a public library is dangerous and impossible. Too many imponderables are involved. However, careful compari-

son of the group of municipal libraries managed by relatively strong and independent boards with the group administered by boards of more limited or weak powers affords some ground for a cautious generalization. As libraries go, it seems safe to say that the first group contains more first-rate libraries and fewer third-rate libraries than does the second.

*Summary of board powers.*—Turning to the more specific question of the actual powers to be assigned to the library board, we may attempt, in conclusion, to list in summary form the various powers and duties ordinarily assigned to library boards. Two general principles may first be laid down in this connection.

In the first place, the determination of the amount of public funds to be allotted to library service should be made by higher authority than the library board. In other words, the library board should not have taxing power. Similarly, the governing body of the city or town, or the people themselves, should determine the question of bond issues for library buildings. The plea for centralizing final authority for the allocation of expenditures from the municipal treasury in the hands of the city government is altogether too reasonable to dispute.

In the second place, incorporation of the municipal library board and the vesting of title to library property in the board are really not vital points. Under certain circumstances, incorporation of the board may be useful and desirable, but it is by no means essential in the case of the average library board. Likewise, questions of title to property may, in particular instances, have special importance, but, in general, distinctions in ownership between the city proper and the board of library trustees are of little real significance. After all, the main point is that the library is public property.

Aside from these general considerations, the powers of the library board may be briefly listed as follows:

*A. Financial powers and duties*

1. To control and make all expenditures from library funds
2. To receive gifts and administer trusts
3. To purchase library sites and to erect buildings
4. To rent property for library use



5. To purchase books, periodicals, maps, and other library materials
6. To purchase supplies and equipment

B. *Administrative powers and duties*

1. To adopt by-laws for the conduct of its own business and to choose its own officers
2. To make rules and regulations for the use of the library
3. To have general control of the library staff  
[This includes the powers of appointment, dismissal, fixing of salaries, and of making necessary rules for the management of the staff]
4. To have general supervision and custody of all property used for library purposes
5. To borrow books from and lend books to other libraries
6. To make annual reports to the municipal government and to the state library extension agency

C. *Saving clause:* To perform all other acts necessary for the management and control of the library

Even the strongest advocate of adequate powers for library boards could scarcely be dissatisfied with an enumeration as extensive and complete as the foregoing. Some such list as this is to be found in the library codes of most states which have detailed laws. For complete independence in the operation of the public library all of the powers specified are probably necessary, but it is possible to amend the list in some particulars without entirely undermining the effectiveness of the board. Modifications of the financial powers are much more easily made than in the administrative group. For example, the powers of purchasing real property and of erecting buildings are not absolutely essential. These are by no means routine matters and can be carried out by joint action of the city authorities and the library board when occasion arises. The same is true of rentals. The purchasing powers of the board, however, are important, and probably should not be restricted beyond the point of voluntary co-operation in certain fields where it is mutually advantageous.

From the administrative powers of the board, scarcely any deductions can be made without serious limitation of the board's control over the library. Possibly the power of appointment of the staff should be limited to recommendations made by the librarian,<sup>78</sup> but this can be accomplished by custom as well as by

<sup>78</sup> Proposed in the tentative draft for a revision of the library law of Washington, 1934.



law. In case a city has an elaborate personnel system providing for all city officers and employees, then it may be wise to fix library salaries according to the municipal schedule. This is more likely to raise the library scale than it is to lower it. In general, however, weakening of these administrative powers rapidly puts the board more or less completely in the advisory class.

The question posed at the beginning of the chapter may now be answered in general terms. The board of library trustees in municipal libraries is, minor exceptions aside, a part of the machinery of local government. It is usually controlled by the city through appointment by the mayor or council. The money which it spends is, with very few exceptions, apportioned to it by decision of the council or of the people themselves. Its independence consists largely in the fact that it is generally able to control its own staff and to administer the library according to the policies which it determines.

## CHAPTER VIII

### AN APPRAISAL OF THE LIBRARY BOARD AS A GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY

**I**N PRECEDING chapters it has been shown that all but a small proportion of American public libraries are administered under the direction of boards of trustees. The form of organization of the various types of boards has been described in detail, and the powers vested in the boards have been analyzed. While there is a conspicuous lack of uniformity in the situation as a whole, the general conclusion is inescapable that the library boards of the country must bear a very large share of the responsibility for the success or failure of the institution over which they have been granted administrative authority.

The library board's responsibility is not so clear or so sharply defined as that of boards of education for the schools. Because of the divided authority of the municipal units and the library boards in the control of the library, and particularly because of the power of the purse which the cities and towns generally wield over the library, they must share this responsibility to a considerable degree. So also must the professional library group, but the librarians have uniformly made the cause of the board their own. The trustees have asked for power; they must assume the burden of responsibility that goes with it.

It is fair, therefore, to penetrate behind the scenes somewhat in an attempt to appraise the value and the importance of the library board as a piece of governmental machinery, and this will be the purpose of this concluding chapter on the library board. In this analysis every effort will be made to deal with actual facts rather than with theories about board administration in general. Repetition of the standard arguments for and against the management of governmental affairs by boards will be avoided as much as possible, and, in the main, reliance will be

placed on concrete applications of this general question to the management of public libraries. In following out this plan the present chapter will include : (1) an analysis of the personnel of library boards, (2) a statement concerning their strength and weakness, and (3) some consideration of certain special problems arising out of the control of libraries by boards.

#### PERSONNEL OF LIBRARY BOARDS

Since the people who take part in government are fully as important as the structure of government itself, a detailed examination of the actual personnel of library boards should afford a sound approach to a judgment of this system of library management. As a partial basis, therefore, for an estimate of the value of library boards, an analysis has been made of the 667 board members in 91 cities of over 30,000 population. This group comprises about one-third of the total number of libraries managed by boards in places of this size. The cities chosen represent 25 states, well distributed throughout the country. Most of the libraries are municipal libraries, but a few examples of boards of school-district and corporation libraries are also included. Detailed information concerning individual members of the boards was obtained, and an attempt was also made to estimate qualitatively the character of the service rendered by the individual members and by the boards as a whole. It should be emphasized that every effort was made to obtain facts concerning boards of all sorts—good, bad, and indifferent. The result is a composite picture of library boards in American cities today which is believed to be reasonably representative and reliable.

*Sex, age, length of service.*—A few simple facts about the sex, age, and period of service of board members will first be presented. Men are heavily in the majority on these ninety-one boards, with 78 per cent of the total membership. On twenty-one of the boards there are no women members at all, and only three boards (all in Indiana) were found with a majority of women. In cities of this size, therefore, library control is still largely a masculine affair.

Statistics of the age of library trustees show a very emphatic preponderance of persons of middle or advanced age. The median for the entire group is fifty-six years, and the striking symmetry of the age grouping is shown in Table XI.

These figures speak so plainly for themselves that comment is scarcely necessary. The relatively small number of members under forty is more than balanced by the number above seventy. There can be little doubt that this high average age, with its natural tendency toward conservatism, is a matter of real significance in determining the attitude of board members toward

TABLE XI  
AGE OF LIBRARY-BOARD MEMBERS

| Age        | Number of<br>Persons | Per Cent |
|------------|----------------------|----------|
| 20-29..... | 3                    | 0.5      |
| 30-39..... | 45                   | 6.7      |
| 40-49..... | 151                  | 22.7     |
| 50-59..... | 223                  | 33.4     |
| 60-69..... | 169                  | 25.4     |
| 70-79..... | 64                   | 9.6      |
| 80-89..... | 11                   | 1.7      |
| Total..... | 666                  | 100.0    |

the functions of the libraries they control. The need for a greater representation of younger people is obvious.

Continuous and long tenure of office is also a striking characteristic of most library boards. For the whole group here considered the median period of service of present members is eight and two-tenths years. Almost 40 per cent of the members have served more than ten years and 15 per cent have served more than twenty years. This long tenure accounts in part, of course, for the high average age of the board membership. That the ideal of continuity in membership has been generally attained is very clear. Indeed, it is more than possible that it has in some cases been carried too far and that members have been retained in office long after their usefulness has passed.

It is interesting to compare library boards and school boards with respect to these two subjects of age and tenure of office. In both, the library boards show decidedly higher figures. The median age of city school boards was found in 1926 to be forty-eight and three-tenths years, as compared with fifty-six years for library boards, and the median tenure of office of school board members, four and one-tenth years, was only half that of library trustees.<sup>1</sup>

TABLE XII  
EDUCATION OF LIBRARY-BOARD MEMBERS

| Education                                     | Number | Per Cent |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------|----------|
| College or university.....                    | 294    | 49       |
| Professional school.....                      | 104    | 18       |
| Advanced university.....                      | 20     | 3        |
| Special (not of collegiate rank)....          | 18     | 3        |
| High school.....                              | 112    | 19       |
| Grammar school.....                           | 30     | 5        |
| Self-educated or little formal education..... | 20     | 3        |
| Total.....                                    | 598    | 100      |

*Education of library-board members.*—Examination of the amount of formal education of library trustees shows that the various appointing authorities feel that education is an important consideration in the selection of members. In a large number of cities there is an effective tradition that library-board members must be well educated. Of 598 board members concerning whom information on this point was available, 70 per cent were in the college, university, or professional school group. This figure is decidedly higher than that for boards of education in cities of the same size, which in 1926 was found to be 53 per cent. Detailed statistics on this subject are presented in Table XII. There can scarcely be any doubt that in these city library

<sup>1</sup> G. S. Counts, *The Social Composition of Boards of Education* (Chicago, 1927), pp. 23-38. In the following discussion this study is used as authority for the comparisons made between library boards and boards of education.



boards educational qualifications have, on the whole, been given very adequate consideration; in point of fact, there may be some question as to whether sufficient representation is given to the great mass of library users who are below the college level in education.

*Occupations of board members.*—Perhaps most significant of all the information about board members is that concerning their

TABLE XIII  
OCCUPATIONS OF LIBRARY-BOARD MEMBERS  
(638 Individuals)

| Profes-<br>sional                    | No. | Financial            | No. | Manufac-<br>turing        | No. | Business                    | No. | Miscel-<br>laneous                 | No. |
|--------------------------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|---------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|-----|------------------------------------|-----|
| Lawyers..                            | 112 | Bankers..            | 32  | Manufac-<br>turers...     | 52  | Retail<br>mer-<br>chants... | 38  | Govern-<br>ment<br>service..       | 18  |
| Doctors..                            | 30  | Brokers..            | 5   | Utility ex-<br>ecutives.. | 4   | Special<br>services..       | 38  | Mechan-<br>ics, fore-<br>men, etc. | 20  |
| Clergy...                            | 28  | Miscel-<br>laneous.. | 9   |                           |     | Employ-<br>ees.....         | 19  | Married<br>women..                 | 90  |
| Profes-<br>sors,<br>teachers.        | 64  |                      |     |                           |     |                             |     | Retired or<br>no occu-<br>pation.. | 29  |
| Engineer-<br>ing, tech-<br>nical.... | 12  |                      |     |                           |     |                             |     | Special ..                         | 9   |
| Journal-<br>ists.....                | 20  |                      |     |                           |     |                             |     |                                    |     |
| Miscel-<br>laneous..                 | 9   |                      |     |                           |     |                             |     |                                    |     |
| Total..                              | 275 | .....                | 46  | .....                     | 56  | .....                       | 95  | .....                              | 166 |
| Per cent..                           | 43  | .....                | 7   | .....                     | 9   | .....                       | 15  | .....                              | 26  |

occupations, for this is the basic fact in the lives of most people. The educational background shown in Table XII prepares the reader somewhat for the statistics on this point, which are summarized in Table XIII.

A few facts stand out sharply in this tabulation. The outstanding strength of the professional group is noteworthy, and within this group itself the legal profession is of greatest importance. Stated concretely, two out of five board members belong to the professional group, and two out of five professional members are lawyers.

As a whole, the business group is strong, but not dominant, and comprises less than a third of the total membership. Big business (financial and manufacturing) and small business are almost equally represented. But within the business group the members are almost entirely in the class of proprietors, managers, or executives. The employee in business is represented by a small group of nineteen persons, and the total number of persons in any group who may be regarded as employees rather than as managers is only forty-four, less than 7 per cent of the total.

If the statistics here presented are a fair sample, a typical American library board of five members in a city of over 30,000 population would be composed as follows: one lawyer; one other professional member, very likely a school superintendent or a teacher; one business man, or a man engaged in business service of some type; one married woman, classified as a housewife but probably interested in women's clubs or in civic organizations; and one additional member, usually either a financier or a manufacturer. Occasionally this typical occupational pattern would be altered by substituting for one of the foregoing members a representative of the labor group, a government official or clerk, or a retired person.

*Economic and social backgrounds.*—The facts regarding library-board personnel which have thus far been presented should be read in the light of certain further information as to the economic and social backgrounds of the members. Some knowledge of this sort is essential to an adequate understanding of the personnel of library boards.

In the first place, we are naturally interested in the financial standing of library trustees. Classification here is difficult because the terms used are necessarily relative. A person commonly considered wealthy in a city of 30,000 probably would not be so described in a city of a million people. In spite of this difficulty, it is possible to divide the board members in these ninety-one cities into three quite definite groups with respect to their financial position. About 40 per cent may fairly be

characterized by the old-fashioned term "people of means"; in the view of their own fellow-citizens they are either wealthy or in very comfortable circumstances. The second and largest group amounts to about 55 per cent of the total and includes persons of modest financial standing. The third group is very small, perhaps 5 per cent of the total, and comprises those members who are at the lower end of the financial scale and whose resources are decidedly limited. The composite financial picture is thus decidedly on the side of comfort and easy circumstances; in general, these library trustees have been reasonably successful financially.

As a rule, library-board members have been satisfied to give their services, rather than their money, to the libraries which they control. A few outstanding exceptions to this rule may be cited, but the situation among the municipal libraries is quite different from that described in the case of the corporate library boards.<sup>2</sup> A considerable number of trustees have donated books, pictures, or equipment to their libraries, but the generosity of the trustees as a group has not been unusual.

Very much the same results as those found in connection with the financial standing of members are to be noted in a classification of trustees according to their general importance and influence in their respective communities. Almost half of them are persons of prominence, generally and widely known. A somewhat smaller proportion are rated as people of medium importance, and a still smaller group of about 15 per cent have little public importance. It should be added at once that a rating such as this is not intended as a scale of value for board members; we are here merely concerned with the fact of personal prominence or the lack of it.

The social viewpoint of the library trustee described in the common terms, conservative or liberal, shows an almost even balance between the two attitudes—a situation which might have been conjectured from the data submitted up to this point. These designations are perhaps too broad and too vague to be of

<sup>2</sup> See p. 94.

the greatest value, but they help materially in the completion of the picture. Admittedly there is a very solid backlog of conservative opinion in board membership, but it is also fair to say that in most cities reasonably strong support will be found for progressive ideas in many directions.

The nationality of library trustees, as exemplified by this whole group, is reported as strongly "American," with two-thirds of the membership thus described. The most important of the other racial groups tabulated are, in the order of size: German, Irish, English, Jewish, Scandinavian, and Czech. A total of twenty-one nationalities is reported, but most of these, aside from those mentioned, account for only one or two individuals.

*Representation of geographical districts in community.*—Since the day when the Board of Trustees of the Boston Public Library was described as a "close corporation" of gentlemen "of similar social position" living "near each other in the Back Bay District,"<sup>3</sup> the question of the representation of various regions or geographical districts within the city has been one of considerable importance. We have already seen that practically all library boards are appointed at large,<sup>4</sup> but this does not prevent the existence of a rather large amount of representation of certain districts by custom. A special effort was made to ascertain how important this was considered in the whole group of cities studied, with the following results: Twenty-three considered residence of much importance in the making of appointments to the board, sixteen considered it of some importance, and thirty-five considered it of no importance at all. The remaining cities did not report on the subject, which may be presumed to mean that the residence of board members is not a significant factor in their appointment.

It is perhaps unwise to direct too much attention to this question of residence of board members. The foregoing figures clearly show that it does not need to be considered in a majority of

<sup>3</sup> C. C. Soule, "The Boston Public Library," *Library Journal*, XVII (1892), 92.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 190.

cities. In other places, however, the representation of certain districts on the library board has come to have the force of unwritten law. The system has its good and bad points. It assures the people of the districts represented that their interests will receive attention in the establishment of branches and other services, but is likely to develop local partisanship and log-rolling methods among the board members themselves. In general, too strict adherence to the policy of regional appointments should be discouraged.

*Political considerations.*—Political affiliation, of course, should not be a factor in the appointment of library trustees. That it actually is not in many cities is shown by the fact that librarians often do not know the politics of board members. For those whose party affiliations were tabulated, the results were as follows: Republicans, 324; Democrats, 215; Independents, 41; Socialists, 4. A decided lag between present political alignments and board membership is apparent, owing in part to the overlapping terms of members and also to the marked tendency toward repeated reappointment of members, regardless of political affiliations. The general situation in most cities seems to be that national politics affects the composition of library boards rather slowly.

*Other governmental and community interests.*—Somewhat related to the foregoing is the interesting question of the extent to which library-board members hold, or have held, other governmental positions of any sort. This question may be answered by the general statement that the great majority of library trustees seem to be interested in this one governmental activity only. About one-fifth of the whole group analyzed are reported to have held other public office. This number is about equally divided between local offices and other governmental positions—federal, state, or county. In a few cities it is apparently quite customary to appoint as library trustees persons who have been active in local government in other capacities, but these cities are exceptional.

Quite a different story is told by the tabulation of non-



governmental organizations in which library-board members are actively interested. Three-fourths of the trustees have some special affiliations of this sort. The range of interests is so broad and inclusive, extending as it does from Shakespeare to the Izaak Walton League, that exact classification is almost impossible. Types of organizations most frequently represented are professional, charity and welfare, church, women's clubs, Rotary and other service clubs, civic, music and art, commercial, patriotic, and fraternal.

The facts thus presented lead to the conclusion that library trustees are commonly drawn from the ranks of those persons who are active in a wide variety of community organizations but are very much less interested in public office.

*Religious affiliations of trustees.*—Religion, like politics, is perhaps a matter which should not be considered in appointments to library boards. It is a fortunate city and a fortunate library board in which the question of the religious affiliations of library trustees is never raised. As in the case of political beliefs, many librarians frankly do not feel it necessary to know the religious connections of their board members. As a whole, membership is predominantly Protestant, with Catholics and Jews also commonly, but less frequently, represented.

Catholic members are found on fifty-one of the boards and Jewish members on twenty-two. It is interesting to note that in most cities where there is a Jewish member there is also a Catholic on the board. The religious question doubtless presents some difficulties in board administration, but there are so many outstanding examples of board members of different religious faiths working together harmoniously that there seems to be no real reason for friction of any sort.

*Value of services rendered by board members.*—One more question, the most important of all, must be asked about these board members. What is their real value as library trustees? A member may be old or young; rich or poor; prominent or unknown; conservative or liberal; Protestant, Catholic, or Jew—all this is interesting and may have an important bearing on the reasons

for his usefulness or lack of it, but it is in the final result that we are most concerned.

On this point the opinion of librarians in the ninety-one cities we have been examining is decisive, although by no means wholly favorable. More than 70 per cent of all the trustees in these cities may be classified as valuable members, whose performance of their official duties is helpful and important. Of the remainder the larger proportion may be set down as fairly satisfactory, and of the others perhaps little need be said. Judged broadly by the quality of the library trustees in this typical selection of American cities, the library-board system is entitled to be considered a reasonably successful demonstration of citizen participation in local government.

*Summary on library-board personnel.*—With results as generally satisfactory as those here briefly summarized it is difficult to quarrel. Perfection has not been attained, but it may be submitted that library boards have little to fear in the comparison of their personnel with that of other municipal bodies of a similar sort. While the library boards studied were in cities of some size, it is probable that situations in smaller places will vary mainly in degree. Educational qualifications of members will probably be lower, and occupational ratios are likely to be considerably different. But, in general, it is not probable that the relative position of board members with respect to their fellow-citizens will vary greatly.

A general criticism of the present order seems possible on only one score. Broadly speaking, it may be said that in determining the kind of people who make the best library trustees there are three criteria on which decisions may be based. One of these is the criterion of interest in public affairs and the unselfish desire of the citizen to serve his city. Another is the criterion of success, of prominence, of influence in the community. The third principle is that of more adequate representation of all the people of the community.

With the first of these, the honest desire of the individual to be of real service to his fellows and to take his part in the public

affairs of his city, there can be no question. But between the criterion of success and the criterion of representation there appears to be a very considerable degree of conflict.

The importance of business or professional success, and of community standing as qualifications for trustees, have been much emphasized in library writing on this subject,<sup>5</sup> and these bases for estimating the value of trustees are frequently used by librarians in many cities. This is only natural, since men and women of this type can be of great practical assistance in furthering the support and the development of library service. Whether the successful business man will always be as ready to urge the need for library support when business is not on the upgrade is, however, by no means so certain, as shown by the test of recent years.

It is not, however, the intent of the foregoing paragraph to dispute the obvious and important advantages of ability and leadership among library board members. These qualities will always be needed. But the evidence of the analysis of board membership just made brings very clearly to the fore the necessity for the serious consideration of the need for more adequate representation of community groups and interests on the library boards of the nation.

It is a patent fact that library trustees are largely drawn from the more fortunate economic and social elements of the community. Although they represent many different occupations, it is very evident that the lesser man in general, and the labor group in particular, have had little consideration in the appointment of library trustees. It is not suggested that membership on library boards be based on some more or less exact proportionate representation of the major population groups. Board members, after all, should be chosen because they have a real interest in the development of libraries, without regard to class. But it seems a fair conclusion to urge that appointing authorities and trustees themselves consider much more seriously than

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., American Library Association, *The Trustee and His Library* (Chicago, 1927), pp. 12-13.

heretofore the selection of direct representatives of the common man as library trustees. Examples of the fortunate results of such appointments are already fairly numerous.

#### THE LIBRARY-BOARD SYSTEM: ASSETS

The preceding section has, by a considerable group of examples, provided the personal background against which the essential values and weaknesses of the board system of control may be discussed in its application to public libraries. It is important that the assets and liabilities of the system be stated as honestly and as concretely as possible. The credit side of the ledger will first be considered. Exactly what are the significant things which the board system has done and is doing for libraries?

*Citizen interest.*—The library board, as an instrumentality of government, has been highly successful in attracting to its membership large numbers of public-spirited citizens. The facts detailed in the preceding section are sufficient proof of this statement. This ability of the library to draw to itself volunteer service of a high order has been important ever since George Ticknor went to Europe to buy books for the Boston Public Library. Although the functions of boards have greatly changed since that day, there is little reasonable doubt that library-board service will continue to be interesting and attractive to desirable persons. This fact is only rarely disputed;<sup>6</sup> indeed, the very excellence of the library board is sometimes made the basis for arguments against it.<sup>7</sup> There are many exceptions to this general rule, but they do not seem to do more than prove its essential correctness. Good city governments are willing to carry on this tradition of satisfactory appointments to library boards and, strangely enough, poor governments often do the same.

This service of volunteer trustees has meant very much more than willingness to add distinction to the board by the mere lus-

<sup>6</sup> W. B. Munro, *Municipal Government and Administration* (New York, 1923), I, 344; *Municipal Administration* (New York, 1934), p. 466.

<sup>7</sup> See below, p. 254.



ter of distinguished names; it has included a high proportion of active, enthusiastic, and unselfish effort on behalf of public libraries, large and small. It is evident again and again that the fortunate development of the library cannot be attributed solely to the librarian and the staff, but that it is equally due to the distinguished service of an outstanding trustee or to a board of generally high quality. It is not too much to suggest that there is a high correlation between good libraries and good boards. Intimately associated with the history of many libraries are the names of certain trustees who have played leading rôles in their development. As examples may be cited White in Cleveland, Duffield in Detroit, Church in Pittsburgh, Ledyard in New York, Carpenter in St. Louis, Noyes in Washington, Bill in Springfield, and scores of others whose service may be little known outside their own communities but is none the less distinguished.

Conversely, it is not infrequently true that indifferent libraries are to be associated with indifferent boards. Either poor quality of membership or the failure of potentially good members to concern themselves sufficiently with the libraries under their direction has been responsible for some unfortunate library situations. Not often does a good librarian have marked success unless he has the support of a reasonably satisfactory board.

*Politics and the library.*—A fair nation-wide judgment entitles library boards to a high degree of credit for keeping the public library "out of politics." By this is meant that the library personnel has, in general, been kept free from the more serious influences of local and national partisanship.

This statement is made in spite of the fact that political considerations have been influential in a number of libraries to a greater extent than many librarians care to admit. But the fact remains that flagrant cases of political domination of public libraries are not numerous in proportion to the total number of libraries in the country. Whenever a library system falls into the hands of a political machine in a really thoroughgoing manner, it is a matter for state-wide and nation-wide comment



among the library group. Nothing damns a public library in the eyes of librarians and library organizations more quickly than the suspicion of political control.

The truth of this statement is generally admitted by competent observers in the field of local government. The library group has been characterized as "perhaps superior in professional standards and ideals to any other functional group of public officials in this country."<sup>8</sup> The fact that the chief librarian easily leads all officials in cities of over 30,000 population in average tenure of office<sup>9</sup> is added testimony to the stability of the professional library group.

General credit for this situation must be given to the library boards, since the power and the responsibility for staff appointments have been very largely in their hands. In this respect it must be recalled that library personnel has been protected by certification laws in only a few states<sup>10</sup> and that libraries have been under civil service control in a relatively small proportion of cities.<sup>11</sup> Under these circumstances the main protection of the library in the maintenance of its personnel standards has been the willingness of the board to make proper appointments. In many cities the board has shown marked courage in resisting political pressure.

Since the beginning of the depression period, pressure of all kinds—political, economic, and particularly local—affecting appointments of library personnel, has increased very greatly. The responsibility of library boards in maintaining the professional integrity of their staffs has correspondingly increased, and a final judgment as to the board's ability to withstand such pressure must be reserved. On its past record it is entitled to high commendation, although not without important reservations. It is not unlikely that library boards today are facing the

<sup>8</sup> "Deplore City Hall Domination" (editorial), *Public Management*, XV (1933), 322; see also L. D. White, "Politics and Civil Service," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, CLXIX (1933), 87.

<sup>9</sup> *Municipal Year Book*, 1934, p. 132.

<sup>10</sup> See pp. 52-53.

<sup>11</sup> See pp. 213-14.

most serious test they have yet encountered in the maintenance of proper personnel standards.

As to the board itself, it has succeeded reasonably well in keeping free from serious political entanglements. As noted in a preceding chapter,<sup>12</sup> wholesale changes in board personnel have been uncommon. Since the recent general overturn in national politics, there have been numerous examples of current appointments to library boards which have been made in payment of political debts, and in a few cases made for the purpose of controlling such patronage as the library affords. This tendency has been most marked among the boards of municipal libraries, which are of course especially subject to control of this sort.

*The board as a testing-ground for policy and administration.*—Many commentators on the value of the library board emphasize the importance of its responsibilities in the appointment of a competent librarian and staff to such an extent that there is some danger of allowing the subject to drop at that point and of overlooking other important services which the board renders. When the question of the actual effect which the board may have on the administration of the library is stripped of all non-essentials and is viewed with complete honesty, it will be seen that one of the most important functions of the board is that it serves as a testing-ground for the ideas and accomplishments of the professional librarian.

This raises the whole broad question of the respective provinces of policy determination and of administration in its application to public library management. In many discussions of this subject in all fields of public administration, policy and administration are each neatly boxed and labeled and separated from each other by a rather sharply defined boundary. The administrator is warned to keep out of the area set aside for policy, and the governing body, whether library board, school board, city council, or any one of a score of others, is warned to avoid the area marked off for administration. With regard to the second warning there can be little question; actual and effective

<sup>12</sup> See pp. 193-94.

administration by a board of any kind is most difficult and should not be encouraged.

But with regard to the respective parts of the board and of the administrator in the determination of policy there is much more question, in the opinion of the writer. Keeping the discussion strictly within the library field, close examination does not reveal any such sharp distinction between the functions of the library board and those of its executive officer as that suggested in the preceding paragraph. The board accepts the responsibility for policy but does not necessarily initiate it. A conscientious attempt to discover examples of the actual initiation of policy by library boards brings to light very few important cases. In one or two larger libraries and in some smaller ones it seems clear that certain fundamental policies have been suggested by trustees and carried through because of their interest and direction, but concrete examples of the sort are difficult to find. The usual and typical situation shows the librarian suggesting or proposing plans or policies, and the board approving, modifying, or occasionally rejecting these suggestions.<sup>13</sup>

The relation of the board to the librarian in this connection may be visualized as that of the amateur sitting in judgment on the professional. This relationship should be that of a group of intelligent and interested representatives of the public weighing in friendly but critical fashion the merits of proposals submitted for their consideration. There is little doubt that many professional executives need some restraint, and without it are likely to lose perspective. The "excessive zeal" of the expert must occasionally be moderated<sup>14</sup> or translated into practical and human results.

The collective value of this sort of amateur control of library administration must not be underestimated. Most librarians whose experience with boards has been at all fortunate will rec-

<sup>13</sup> This is in no sense intended as a reflection on library trustees. They must rely upon the suggestions made by their professional advisers.

<sup>14</sup> T. H. Reed, *Municipal Government in the United States* (rev. ed.; New York, 1934), pp. 285-86. This is a very interesting general statement of the value of amateur boards.

ognize the substantial truth of this point of view. They will be the first to admit that the presence of the board has caused them to organize and prepare their proposals with the utmost care, and has often resulted in the abandonment of ideas which could not be reduced to satisfactory form, or in the modification or improvement of recommendations. Nor is amateur judgment valuable only in questions of policy; it enters into the appraisal of the results of administration and may also be of much value in restraining the technical zeal of the expert and in insuring the human quality of library routines and procedures.

*Interpretation by the board.*—Closely allied to these judicial values of the board is its importance as an agency of interpretation of the library to the community and of the community to the library. It is difficult to say which of the two is more important. The value of the board as a body which collectively or individually represents the library to the people and officials of the city is, or should be, a very concrete and positive thing. It would be easy to illustrate this point by an almost limitless series of specific examples of the weight carried by an official statement by the board or of a mere word of an influential trustee offered at the right time or in the right place. This is the sort of thing which no librarian can possibly do for himself.

Somewhat less selfishly, however, the board assists in the interpretation of the community to the librarian and the staff. A group can gauge public opinion far better than a single individual and has a wider knowledge of the community as a whole. As we have already seen, the board represents many interests and often many localities of the city. Moreover, its members have usually lived long in their community and know its history, its idiosyncrasies, and its people. In this respect they may be of inestimable value to the librarian and will prevent many serious mistakes.

*Continuity of boards.*—Finally, there is the time-honored argument of continuity of policy so often used as a main support for boards of all kinds. The mere fact that it is old and trite should not result in failure to give it due weight. The manner by which



continuity is usually obtained in library boards through a system of overlapping terms has already been discussed in a previous chapter.<sup>15</sup> As an institution the library needs a continuous and steady policy in its management and support as much as any governmental function. Both additions and subtractions from its service must be carefully weighed, and the necessary adjustments are not easily made.

For example, its whole system of branches and extension agencies must be planned long in advance and must be developed in accordance with the plan adopted. Its staff must be carefully chosen; key positions should be filled with future adjustments, rearrangements, and promotions in mind. The basic policies of book selection, also, must be determined long in advance and must be steadily adhered to if the collection is to develop in an orderly and systematic manner. Decisions as to the building up of special collections must be continued in force over long periods of time. Plans for the development of special strength in certain fields can only be made effective when carried forward deliberately for many years. Even the apparently simple matter of making rules and regulations and the manner in which they are to be enforced must be treated consistently. Most certainly a library does not thrive on administration by fits and starts.

In all of these matters the board, as well as the librarian, should be interested and concerned. When changes are made in the position of librarian, the cumulative background of knowledge on the part of the board will be of inestimable value. Even when all of these matters of policy seem safe in the hands of a competent staff, the existence of a board which understands the reasons for certain decisions will be of material assistance in the maintenance of continuity.

#### THE LIBRARY-BOARD SYSTEM: LIABILITIES

At every point in the foregoing catalog of assets of the library board the critical reader has perhaps been picking flaws in the

<sup>15</sup> See pp. 190-94.



general picture presented and has been mentally recalling examples in which results were quite the contrary from those suggested. It would be foolish to deny the existence of a negative side to the picture, and the failures of the library board must be frankly admitted and considered. Without unnecessary repetition of standard arguments against board administration in general, exactly what are the important dangers and weaknesses in board control of public library service? Some of the questions here raised relate largely to governmental structure; others are more directly concerned with the successful administration of the library.

*Effect of the board system on local government.*—From the point of view of structure, the library board does its part in contributing to the decentralization of authority in local government. Its mere existence, along with that of other more or less similar boards, adds to the complexity of government and prevents complete administrative unity.<sup>16</sup> This fact in itself cannot be disputed. It should be recalled, however, as shown in the preceding chapter,<sup>17</sup> that this separation of the library board applies almost wholly to administration and that most cities have a large measure of financial control over their libraries.

Perhaps more serious is the suggestion that the very success of the library in attracting outstanding citizens to its governing body is thereby withdrawing those citizens from potential service to the city as a whole. The gain of the library, in other words, is a loss to the city. In a broad sense there is some force in this contention. It is a well-known fact, for instance, that many citizens who seem to have no desire to hold other municipal office are willing to serve on library boards. Whether the abolition of library boards would turn the interests of these public-spirited citizens into general municipal channels and would result in their selection as council members, for example, or would merely mean the entire loss of their services to the city is a matter of opinion.

<sup>16</sup> C. E. Ridley and O. F. Nolting, "Economics in Public Libraries," *Public Management*, XV (1933), 112-16.

<sup>17</sup> See pp. 214-20.

*Boards not economical.*—A common criticism of the board system in general is that the enthusiasm of members of a board for their particular governmental hobbies destroys their sense of proportion and causes them to “make financial demands regardless of the needs of other services.”<sup>18</sup> In this connection the library board is between the devil and the deep sea. If it asks for what it feels the library needs, it may subject itself to criticism from the taxpayer; if it takes a broad view of public financial problems and lowers its budget estimates, it is subject to criticism by the friends of the library for lack of courage. On the whole, it does not seem that library boards have been serious offenders in making unreasonable demands for public funds.

*Toleration of ineffectiveness.*—Undoubtedly the most severe indictment which can be made of the library-board system is that altogether too many boards have been tolerant of inefficient and imperfect library administration. Worse still, some boards have apparently not even reached the preliminary stage of knowing when library service was unsatisfactory and have been too complacent or too uninterested to check this matter for themselves. The members of such boards are not corrupt; they are merely more concerned with the prestige attached to the position of library trustee than with their responsibilities as municipal officials. It requires real courage and energy to rectify unsatisfactory conditions; and these qualities seem to be lacking in some boards.<sup>19</sup>

Such tolerant complacency with poor library administration and service may take many forms. Most often, perhaps, there is unwillingness to take decisive steps in the direction of the appointment of a competent library staff. There is no more severe test of a board than its willingness to act vigorously in clearing up bad personnel conditions. Other boards are unready to make an effective presentation of the financial requirements of the libraries under their control. For personal reasons the trustees may incline to excessive caution in approaching the appropriat-

<sup>18</sup> A. R. Hatton, *Retrenching in State and Local Expenditures*, “Government Series,” Lecture No. 10 (1932), p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> W. B. Munro, *Municipal Administration* (1934), p. 466.

ing authorities of their cities, even though they may be fully aware of the need of the library for more adequate funds.

*Interference in administration.*—Another serious difficulty with library-board administration arises fully as often from too much zeal rather than from too little. This is the tendency of numerous boards to interfere in the actual management of the library. Sometimes in plainer language it is called meddling.

More often than not, trustees intervene in the internal administration of the library because they feel it is their business to do things themselves, and they are merely eager to be of practical assistance in the conduct of the library. In this form board interference is least serious and is usually readily corrected. When the situation reaches the point of personal pressure in the making of staff appointments, or of dealing directly with staff members rather than through the librarian, or of being personally interested in library purchases, then the matter is indeed serious.

Direct administrative action by trustees is far more common in small libraries than in large. This is perhaps natural because of differences in the type of librarian. The city librarian who is head of an organization of some size is usually more competent as an administrator than is the librarian of the small library. The latter, perhaps, needs more assistance and direction, but active interference by the board is still unpardonable.

Trustees ought not to attempt to administer the library themselves but should leave that function to the librarian. Until this general policy is more nearly universally understood and adopted, the library board will be subject to serious criticism on the score of interference.

#### SPECIAL PROBLEMS

In connection with the administration of the public library under the direction of its own board, several problems of a special nature arise which must be considered briefly before this chapter is concluded.

*The cost of separate organization to the library.*—So closely and

so narrowly has the attention of library authorities been concentrated on the maintenance of a separate organization that relatively little consideration has been given to the possibility that aloofness may be costly to the library purely as a matter of dollars and cents. It has more than once been suggested that a greater degree of conformity to municipal government in general might result in correspondingly greater sympathy with the library in its requests for support from the city treasury.

While it is conceivable that this is a long-range possibility, it is not supported by adequate evidence at the present time. As a matter of fact, the trend seems to be, if anything, in the opposite direction. In the preceding chapter the declining ratio in library support in city department libraries without boards (the least independent of all libraries) was noted. And it is also true that the proportion of library expenditures to total municipal expenditures in cities with relatively strong boards is definitely higher than in libraries with boards of more limited powers.<sup>20</sup> As a general conclusion, it may be asserted that independence of administrative organization has not yet caused the library to suffer financially.

In another direction the results of separation may have been more serious. There is a very common tendency to separate the library and its personnel sharply from the "city hall crowd," with the resulting implication that the library is attempting to avoid the contamination of association with the remainder of the city government. In some instances this situation has resulted in nothing more serious than a slight coolness between the library and the city hall; in others there has been downright antagonism. There is little doubt that this fact has caused many opportunities of mutual interest to be missed.<sup>21</sup>

The answer to this situation is not necessarily complete amalgamation of the library in the structure of city government and

<sup>20</sup> Average ratio for municipal libraries in 110 cities with strong boards, 1.8 per cent; in 78 cities with boards of limited powers, 1.4 per cent (U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Financial Statistics of Cities*, 1930).

<sup>21</sup> See C. H. Judd, "Abolish the School Boards," *Public Management*, XV (1933), 321; "Deplore City Hall Domination" (editorial), *Public Management*, XV (1933), 322.



the abandonment of administrative control by its separate board. There mere fact that the library is directed by a board should not, and in hundreds of instances does not, preclude the possibility of close co-operation between the library and the rest of the city government. However, if the library authorities are wise, opportunities for correlation and integration will be sought under all reasonable conditions.

*Administrative methods of the board.*—The success or failure of board control of public libraries depends to a rather large extent on the manner in which the board conducts its business and on the functions which it actually performs. While the scope of the present study is not intended to include any detailed investigation of the actual methods of library-board operation, certain points relative to the action of boards are pertinent to the present discussion.

In the first place, American municipal library boards are almost unanimous in holding their regular meetings once a month. The number of exceptions to this general rule is very small indeed. A few boards meet irregularly and a very few meet quarterly or less frequently than monthly. It is very uncommon for boards to meet oftener than once a month. Four boards in cities of over 30,000 population meet twice a month and a single board meets weekly. Custom is so strongly in favor of the monthly meeting that it seems reasonable to suggest that meetings at less frequent periods are indicative of insufficient attention to library affairs. More frequent meetings, on the other hand, may be justified in certain cities, but are subject to the suspicion that the board is concerning itself with too many matters of detail.

The important officers of a library board are the president, the secretary, and, when necessary, the treasurer. The presidency of the board is a highly responsible office, and the trustee filling the place must expect to be active, especially in large libraries. The very importance of the office brings with it the danger of dominance of the board by a single individual. Leadership is to be expected, but practically complete control by one person is



scarcely in line with the purpose of a library board. Instances of complete control of the board (and the library) by board presidents are by no means unknown, even at the present time; but, fortunately, the day of the president who comes to the library daily for the transaction of business has almost passed. In such cases he becomes in effect the director of the library, and the proper relationship between the librarian and the board is entirely overthrown. There is a growing tendency toward rotation in the office of president, particularly in certain large cities where the duties of the office are fairly exacting. This system distributes responsibilities, brings out the latent capabilities of members, and has much to commend it.

As yet the committee system of administration is still largely prevalent among American libraries, and most by-laws of library boards provide for a more or less extensive list of committees. The use of the committee system dates back to the period when library boards were very much more active in the actual administration of the library than they are now. At the present time important changes in this whole system seem to be taking place. In many libraries the work performed by the committees is becoming more and more perfunctory and of decreasing importance in the actual business of the board. In a growing number of cities (more than thirty at the present time) the board now acts substantially as a committee of the whole. In other places this result is approximated because the various committees, though nominally still in existence, really do not function.

In most public libraries today there should be a reappraisal of the whole committee system in the light of modern conditions. There is little doubt that in many libraries the retention of the system is a fruitful source of mismanagement and of the perpetuation of the wrong type of relationship between board and librarian. In some places a survey of this sort would undoubtedly convince the boards that committees are often actually performing functions, or interfering in functions which properly belong to the librarian. In a large number of boards it would be found that there is little or no need for standing committees and

that the board would operate to better advantage as a committee of the whole. In other libraries it would be evident that the committee structure might be greatly simplified. Certain committees, such as finance committees in libraries with endowments and trust funds, or administrative committees in the case of large boards or large libraries, seem to be more necessary than others, and would no doubt merit retention.

The committee of the whole method of transacting business is now extensively used in boards of education and in city councils, and its more frequent use by library boards would appear to be in line with modern administrative procedure. The adoption of the plan does not prevent the appointment of special committees when occasions requiring their services arise. At such times the committee is necessary and important.

*Relation of board to librarian.*—More than once in the preceding pages the subject of the relationship which should exist between trustees and librarian has been touched upon. Essentially this is an administrative rather than a governmental matter, and need not concern us in detail here. It is, however, necessary to emphasize the fact that the successful operation of the library-board plan depends upon the establishment of proper relations between the board and its executive, the librarian. The essential points are that the librarian should be given full authority over the administration of the library, while the board should make itself responsible for policies and should scrutinize results. Interesting models to follow in this connection are to be found in the relations of the city manager to the city council<sup>22</sup> and of the superintendent of schools to the board of education.

#### CONCLUSION

In this chapter there has been attempted a fair statement of the facts concerning the library board as a group of individuals and of its strength and weakness as a governing body. It is not

<sup>22</sup> C. E. Ridley and O. F. Nolting, *The City-Manager Profession* (Chicago, 1934), pp. 29-32.

to be expected that all observers will place the same interpretation on these facts.

Looking first at the board members as people, and accepting local government and politics as they exist in cities today, we may safely assert that the board plan of library control has enlisted the services of an excellent group of citizens in the direction of library affairs. As a type the library trustee is invariably honest, usually successful, more often than not well-educated, and reasonably active and efficient in the performance of his duties. These facts are simple, but important.

Admittedly, however, much improvement is urgently necessary in the composition of many boards. As a group the library boards of the country need a strong dash of the elixir of youth and a further dash of rejuvenation of another sort through the elimination of members whose service has nothing to commend it except mere length. Finally, there is even more need for representation of social levels that have hitherto been largely unrepresented. Some such treatment as this would make the library board about as satisfactory a body of public servants as the realist in government could reasonably expect to find.

The library board as an agency of government will continue to serve as laboratory material in the never ending argument for and against the board system in general. Its chances of survival are better if it is judged by results than if regarded as a theoretical form. Its advantages, when honestly evaluated, are seen to be positive and definite and have proved themselves over and over again in actual practice. Its disadvantages and its failures are sufficiently serious to cause sincere regret, but they are not inherent in the system and are susceptible of correction.

As a governmental form the board system has suited the needs of the library admirably. It provided stimulus and actual direction in the early days of the public library movement; it protected the library from political interference and gave it support through the formative period; at present, when the objectives and methods of the public library are being subjected to

extremely critical reappraisal, its steady influence and its continued support should be equally important.

For those who believe at all in the importance of the historical approach to the solution of governmental problems, there is much significance in the persistent manner in which the board has continued as a part of the library system of the nation. Although its tradition may be greater than its performance, the mere momentum of the tradition is a valuable and positive force for good government which has been built up through many years of effort.

On its record, the library board, in most cities, at least, has earned the right to survive. The considered judgment of a keen student of government may be paraphrased by concluding that to scrap the services of these bodies of competent and public-spirited citizens "in the interest of . . . administrative uniformity is folly."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Reed, *op. cit.*, p. 286; see also Munro, *Municipal Administration* (1934), pp. 462-63.

## CHAPTER IX

### LARGER UNITS OF LIBRARY SERVICE: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

IN COMMON with many other functions of government, the public library suffers from certain obvious difficulties in rendering efficient and complete service to all the people. In the main these difficulties center about the unit of library service, and thus inevitably the problem of regionalism presents itself for consideration. It was raised originally by the missionary zeal of the librarian, who has always fervently believed that if library service is good for some people, it must be equally advantageous for all. More recently, the rapidly growing insistence of students and practitioners of government on a thorough overhauling and revision of the structure of local government—particularly directed at a radical reduction in the number of units—has necessarily involved the library. Pressure both from within and from without the library group, therefore, has raised this question of the proper unit of library service to a position of major importance.

Up to the present point we have been considering public libraries which are attached to one or another of the smaller units of local government. At various stages in our survey we have seen the library made a part of the school district, the city, the incorporated village, the New England town, and the middle western township. In all these cases the library has been brought close to the people it actually serves, and immediate local interest and support have been important factors in its development. The present chapter will be devoted to the consideration of the possibilities of the enlargement of the library unit and of the difficulties involved in changes in this direction.



## COUNTY LIBRARIES: GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

Beyond the strictly local stage, the apparently inevitable step was an advance to the next larger unit in the hierarchy of government, the county. Hailing with enthusiasm the first successful attempts in the establishment of county libraries made at the turn of the century,<sup>1</sup> the national and state library associations of the country placed themselves squarely behind the development of this type of library unit.

As a result, the phrase "county library" has been so firmly established in library usage and thought that, until very recently, other possibilities received almost no consideration. Before going farther afield, therefore, we must take time at this point to examine briefly the organization of the library as a part of county government.

As currently used in the United States, the words "county library" are loosely applied to any type of library service to a county or any considerable portion of it. Thus used, the term often gives an impression of unified service to the whole county which may or may not be the actual fact. It is therefore important to distinguish clearly between the governmental and geographical meanings which are at various times included in what is commonly called county library service. These may be classified as follows:

## A. Governmental types of county libraries

1. Libraries which are part of the county government
2. Libraries which are part of both the city and the county government
3. Municipal libraries or libraries of other types which serve the county by contract

## B. Geographical types of county libraries

1. Libraries which serve the entire area of the county
2. Libraries which serve only a part of the area of the county, usually omitting the larger cities

A considerable number of permutations and combinations of the foregoing definitions are of course possible. For instance, a

<sup>1</sup> County libraries for Hamilton (Cincinnati) and Van Wert counties, Ohio, and Washington County, Maryland, were all authorized by law in 1898 (H. C. Long, *County Library Service* [Chicago, 1925], pp. 18-21).

county library which is part of the county government (Group A-1) may serve the whole county on equal terms (Group B-1), or it may serve only those portions of the county which elect to join the county library system (Group B-2). The most truly complete type of county library is the one which is a subdivision of the county government and which serves the entire county as a single unit.

Of the more than three thousand counties in the United States, only two hundred and thirty provide county library service of one or the other of the foregoing kinds by appropriations in excess of \$1,000 a year. About two-thirds of these libraries fall in Group A-1, in which the library is part of the county structure. Only a few of the joint city-and-county type are found, and the remainder of the counties receive service by contract. The number of counties which are served with substantial completeness is 163 and the number partially served is 67.<sup>2</sup>

Geographically, the county libraries are heavily concentrated in the Mountain and Far Western states and in the South. New England has elected to use another method of library service and has no county libraries. In the Central Atlantic states New Jersey has the only important group. In the Middle Western states the type is somewhat more common, and several states are represented by groups of five or more county libraries.<sup>3</sup>

In this description of county library organization the classification given above will be followed, and the first group to be considered will be the county libraries which are organized as a part of the county government. The extent to which the county library movement has been confined to small cities and to rural territory is strikingly shown by the fact that there are only five cities of over 30,000 population which are parts of county libraries in this strict governmental sense. These include the four

<sup>2</sup> Information from Library Extension Board of the American Library Association. See mimeographed list entitled "Libraries Receiving County Appropriations for County Public Library Service," 1934.

<sup>3</sup> See Table XIV, pp. 321-22.

county-seat cities of Cincinnati, Ohio; Wheeling, West Virginia; Fresno, California; Amarillo, Texas; and also the city of Norwood, Ohio, which is a branch of the Public Library of Cincinnati (county library district of Hamilton County).

In general, these county libraries present no new types of organization essentially different from those developed in our study of municipal libraries. As a whole, the county library group is much more completely controlled by state library laws than are the municipal libraries, owing to the fact that most American counties are still organized under state laws. It must be remembered, however, that the progress of home rule for counties, accompanied by the drafting of home-rule charters for their government, may in time affect the legal status of county libraries in much the same manner as that described in the case of home-rule cities.<sup>4</sup>

Libraries which are part of the county government may be divided, as in the case of cities, into two principal groups—those administered under the direction of library boards and those administered without boards under the direction of the county commissioners. The county library laws of thirty-one states provide for the first method of administration and only three state laws provide for the second method, one of the latter, however, being the state with the largest number of county libraries—California.<sup>5</sup>

In the case of libraries governed by boards the county commissioners, or other governing body of the county, usually appoint the library board, which has a membership varying from three to nine, sometimes including one or more *ex officio* members. In their composition, and in the term of office of members, these boards are closely similar to the typical municipal library board.

Of this type of library, the Public Library of Cincinnati is the

<sup>4</sup> See pp. 60-62.

<sup>5</sup> American Library Association, "Tabulation of County Library Laws in the United States" (rev. December, 1930). Mimeographed broadside.

most important example in the country.<sup>6</sup> It is a "county library district," governed by a board of seven members, four appointed by the county commissioners and three by the county court. The members of the board serve for terms of seven years, with one member going out of office annually. The board's powers are very complete, corresponding in the main to those of the Ohio school-district libraries previously described.<sup>7</sup> Also like the school-district libraries, the county library receives its funds from the proceeds of the state tax on intangible property. Allocations from this fund to the library are made as a lump-sum appropriation by the County Budget Commission.

A quite similar example is the county library of Ohio County, West Virginia, of which the city of Wheeling is a part.<sup>8</sup> Formerly a school-district library for Wheeling only, this is now a unified county library. The library organization is not typical, however, since the library draws its support from a tax levied by the county board of education, and its governing board is appointed by the judges of the county court.

The New Jersey group of county libraries presents some interesting variations from the usual type of county library organization. The New Jersey method is in essence a federal plan in which the county and the local library unit co-operate, and in its work the county library more nearly resembles a library commission than it does a centralized library unit. As a matter of fact, the governing board of the library is designated the County Library Commission. Cities and towns which already maintain separate libraries are not included in the county library unless they voluntarily elect to join the county system. Each local unit which is a part of the county system retains its own separate library board, is responsible for the maintenance of its own quarters, and provides its own librarian. The county supplies the necessary books for the various stations and general

<sup>6</sup> *Laws of Ohio*, 115, 1933, pp. 210-11. For fuller account of the work of this library see below, pp. 277-80.

<sup>7</sup> See pp. 127-31.

<sup>8</sup> West Virginia, *Acts of the Legislature*, Extraordinary Session, 1933, chap. 118.



supervision through the county librarian and staff. The Public Library Commission of the state is also active in supplying books and other service to the county libraries.<sup>9</sup>

Of the type of county libraries administered directly by the governing bodies of the county, California with its forty-four county libraries serving forty-six counties provides the outstanding examples.<sup>10</sup> In its formal legal structure the library is purely and simply a department of the county government, with its chief, the county librarian, appointed by, and directly responsible to the board of supervisors of the county. For the support of the library the commissioners levy a special tax not to exceed one mill on the dollar, which is over and above all other county taxes. The absorption of the library into the governmental structure of the county is thus complete.

In a broader sense, however, the California county libraries are much more than mere local units administered by their respective counties. More nearly, perhaps, than any other group of American libraries, they constitute a unified system of library service, and this aspect of their situation should be emphasized.

The state maintains a very considerable amount of control through the "general supervision" of the county library system by the state librarian, which is provided by law. In practice, this supervision has been made very effective. In the second place, all county librarians must be certificated under examinations conducted by the Board of Library Examiners, of which the state librarian is chairman. In making appointments the county supervisors must confine their selections to persons on the eligible list thus established. As might be expected, the state librarian exercises a considerable amount of influence in appointments of county librarians, through recommendations which he is in a position to make to the various boards of county supervisors. There is a considerable amount of systematic advancement of county librarians from one county to a larger one as capacity is shown for this type of work.

<sup>9</sup> New Jersey, *Cumulative Supplement to Compiled Statutes, 1911-24*, 48-\*1750F; S. B. Askew, "New Jersey County Libraries," *Library Journal*, LII (1927), 341-44.

<sup>10</sup> Long, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-34; *General Laws of California, 1931* (Deering), Act 2750.



Although the staffs of the county libraries are not required to hold certificates, they are largely protected from political pressure by the provisions of the law. Staff members must be appointed by the supervisors on the recommendation of the county librarian and may not be dismissed except for cause. Provision is also made for the establishment of a graded personnel system with the "approval and advice" of the state librarian.

On the whole, then, the picture is that of a library system centering in the state library. Local autonomy is not eliminated, but the influence of the state is very important. The county librarian is a powerful administrative officer who looks to the county for support but also looks to the state as the fountain-head of the system.

The California county libraries have been successful in bringing into their organizations a very high proportion of the school districts of the state, and with these have come the important funds provided by law for the purchase of books for school libraries. This school-district connection has been a strong backlog of support in the building-up of county library service throughout the state. Many of the teachers' professional libraries, also, have been amalgamated with the county libraries, and some of the county law libraries as well.

The majority of the municipal libraries, on the other hand, have maintained their separate status as independent libraries. Only one city of over 30,000 population, Fresno, has surrendered its own municipal library in favor of complete amalgamation with a county library system.<sup>11</sup> This county is an outstanding example of almost completely unified and centralized library service on a uniform basis throughout the whole county, with all the book resources of the county available to every inhabitant. More typical is the situation in Los Angeles and Alameda counties, for example, in which the county libraries, though large and powerful, serve only those portions of the counties outside the larger cities.

The two other states whose county libraries are administered

<sup>11</sup> One other important example, Bakersfield, may be cited.

directly by the governing boards of the counties are Texas and Montana. The county library laws of these states follow the California model in many particulars. The largest city in the two states which is part of a county system is Amarillo, Texas. Although legally a part of the county, the important part of the library's service is to the city, since over 90 per cent of the county's population is concentrated in Amarillo itself. It is evident that this library unit might with advantage enlarge its service area to several adjoining counties.

Most of Indiana's fifteen county libraries may be described as joint libraries of the county-seat cities and their respective counties (Group A-2). Usually the official names of these libraries combine the names of the city and the county. Thus we have the Rochester-Fulton County Library, the Public Library of Fort Wayne and Allen County, and other similar titles. When county library service of this type is organized, four county members are added to the library board of the central city to represent the county interests. These members vote only on questions relating to county library service. In many of the counties all the townships have joined the county library; in others, county service covers only a portion of the county. Each township in the system pays a library tax now fixed by the County Tax Adjustment Board. It is specially interesting to note that in most of the counties there is a differential in the tax levy favoring the outlying townships, whose rate is usually somewhat less than that of the central city.

These Indiana county libraries have several important advantages. They provide wholly unified library service, at least for that portion of the county served. In particular, the library of the county-seat city is not detached from the system. The book resources of the library of the central city are thus placed fully at the disposal of the whole county. Administratively, the outlying agencies are attached to the central library and are served and supervised by its staff. It is unnecessary to disturb the governmental organization of the county-seat library by transferring it to the county. It is, however, true that the resulting or-

ganization is essentially more nearly a part of the city than it is of the county.<sup>12</sup>

The third and last type of county library from the viewpoint of its governmental connection is that in which library service is rendered by contract with an existing library. Here, of course, no governmental change is involved, and the library which provides the service may be of any type. A number of libraries which have been variously classified in earlier portions of this study are county libraries in this sense. One outstanding example of this type is the Library Association of Portland, Oregon, which serves Multnomah County. This is one of the largest unified library services in the country. A few counties in California are served in this manner, although it is relatively uncommon in that state. Two county libraries in California, also, give service to neighboring counties by the contract method.

In summing up the importance of the county library movement in its application to the question of service to larger units, it may be said that its predominant emphasis has been on service to rural areas.<sup>13</sup> Only secondarily has it been an urban development, and very few important city libraries have changed to county status.

As a thoroughgoing and complete solution of the regional library problem, the county library is not the only answer, and not necessarily the best answer, to the question. This point will be developed somewhat more fully later in the chapter. The idea of the county library has been so thoroughly implanted in the consciousness of librarians that in some places it may actually be harmful in the sense that it prevents the study of the whole subject of library regionalism on broader lines.

#### GENERAL VIEW OF THE REGIONAL PROBLEM

The county library has made an excellent beginning, but only a beginning, in the solution of the library's regional problem.

<sup>12</sup> Burns' *Annotated Indiana Statutes*, 1926, secs. 9702-9; *Library Occurrent*, IX (1929), 73-104.

<sup>13</sup> This is shown quite clearly by the predominance of articles on rural aspects of the problem in E. M. Fair (ed.), *Countrywide Library Service* (Chicago, 1934).

That such a problem still exists is sufficiently evident from even the briefest survey of the American library scene today. Forty-five million people, or nearly two-fifths of the American population, live in governmental areas which have no library service. More than 1,000 of the 3,068<sup>14</sup> American counties have no public libraries of any kind within their boundaries; and 233 cities and towns with a population of over 5,000<sup>15</sup> are also without libraries. If statistics for the area in square miles which is without library service were available, they would undoubtedly show the unserved area to be greater than that served by libraries. The great drive for more libraries which characterized the decade following the close of the World War has, to a large extent, lost its momentum. In the inevitable lull before its resumption a careful reappraisal of the methods used in the past and of the possibilities of the future is in order.

The foregoing figures show plainly enough that there is no such thing as equalization of library service, or even an approximation of it. Even if we disregard those regions which have no public libraries at all, there is the widest possible variation in the quantity and quality of library service. The kind of public library to which a citizen has access depends not on his need but on the wealth of the community in which he chances to live. Sometimes that wealth is so great that he is almost abundantly served; at other times it is so small that his service is mediocre or actually nil.

Moreover, in only a few states has there been a well-planned and powerful marshaling and amalgamation of library resources. The idea of a completely integrated system of public libraries, while approximated in a very few states, is almost wholly lacking in most. Often the emphasis has been placed on the development of a particular type of library and on the strengthening of the local units of that type; seldom has it been directed at joint and unified action of all libraries in a common cause. Especially is this true of the relationship of public libra-

<sup>14</sup> A. W. Bromage, *American County Government* (New York, 1933), p. 205.

<sup>15</sup> Data from American Library Association.



ries to university and college libraries, to quasi-public reference libraries, to school libraries, and to the establishment of reservoir libraries.

The problem of regionalism as a whole, then, includes not only those portions of the country which are not now served by public libraries but almost equally the relation of existing libraries to each other and to the areas now without libraries. It would be visionary, indeed, to anticipate a single wholly satisfactory solution of the manifold difficulties suggested in any program of the kind here implied. Clearly, no single point of view is broad enough to embrace all aspects of the question. Our next concern, therefore, must be to undertake a somewhat detailed investigation of the whole problem from these several points of view, beginning with the governmental questions involved.

#### THE REGIONAL PROBLEM: GOVERNMENTAL ASPECTS

We have had repeated occasion to stress the fact that the public library is a voluntary local service which the state permits, but does not require, the local unit to undertake.<sup>16</sup> This is a basic difficulty which is to be regretted, not only because it necessitates a restricted interpretation of the legal rights and independent powers of the library, but also because it may complicate and retard the rational, efficient, and even economical development of the library system as a whole. If the library is to reach its ultimate goal, a working compromise between state and municipal interests in its functions must be made; in particular, the importance of the state's concern with the library must be recognized and given legal status when necessary.

The most serious difficulty lies in the fact that none of the various political units of which the library has usually been a part, or to which, at least, it has been attached, is necessarily the best natural unit for library service, when considered from the viewpoint of all the people of a state or of the nation. No one can

<sup>16</sup> See pp. 48-49.



deny that a city, with its compact area and its relatively dense population, is an efficient library unit in and of itself. But the boundaries of the city are often artificial and meaningless, particularly so to the suburban resident within easy distance of its facilities. The township is a solid six-mile square block absolutely unrelated to anything real in modern life.<sup>17</sup> The county, although entitled to more consideration because of its size, is in many parts of the nation merely another characterless checker-board of territory.<sup>18</sup> In many instances, also, its former functions are being absorbed by the state in the general process of centralization. Nearly always the boundaries of all these units disregard the actual facts of modern social and economic life.

At this point the library is indeed between Scylla and Charybdis. Shall it wait until the whole pattern of local government is subjected to a thorough overhauling? Students of government insist that sweeping changes must be made and wish to plan the new structure as a whole. But at best changes of such magnitude come slowly, and the difficulties facing a comprehensive program of governmental reconstruction are very great indeed. Or shall the library boldly seek the creation of special units or districts better suited to its own needs, and thus perhaps expose itself to the criticism often directed at *ad hoc* authorities of this sort? Of the two alternatives the latter seems preferable. It is even conceivable that library experimentation along these lines may assist in pointing the way to consolidation in other fields.

Another obstacle—one of the most serious—in the way of enlargement of the library unit is the question of the distribution of the tax burden. Any exact balance, either of cost or of service rendered, between the localities united in a regional library system is almost impossible. If taxes for the library are distributed evenly over the entire area, the central city may bear the heaviest share of the burden. If taxes are distributed according to

<sup>17</sup> The New England town is decidedly a more sensible geographical unit.

<sup>18</sup> C. B. Joeckel, "Keeping Pace with Michigan," *Michigan Library Bulletin*, XX (1929), 253-56.

service received, the cost may easily be prohibitive in certain units. Only a strong belief in the essential value of the whole scheme can overcome these obstacles.

A final governmental difficulty must be faced. A compelling argument usually made for the consolidation of governmental units and the reduction of the huge number of separate entities now in existence is that important savings will be made by such amalgamations. The literature of the subject is emphatic on this point. It may as well be admitted frankly that such hopes are largely vain in the case of libraries. The principal reason lies in the only too obvious fact that every expanded library unit will almost surely include more or less territory which has never before had library service. Even though service in rural areas may be given at relatively low cost, more people must be served, and there is no way of accomplishing this without more money. In case of the incorporation of existing village and city libraries into larger units, the abolition of a number of separate library boards would mean fewer books of minutes to be kept, fewer separate bills to be paid, fewer reports to be made, and fewer separate sets of accounts to be kept. Some time would be saved in this connection by a consolidation of units. Probably there might also be a certain saving on supervisory salaries. But the amounts thus saved, while not entirely negligible, could not be great. Service to readers and books would be needed just as much as ever—much more, if the area served included new territory. Moreover, the new unit might seek to improve its methods and its service over those of the formerly separate units, with resulting increases in operating expense. In municipal libraries, for example, unit costs per volume circulated are usually somewhat higher in larger libraries than in smaller institutions, owing, to some extent, to this very reason.<sup>19</sup> Only by reductions in the number of points at which service is given, or by a general lowering of the quality of service, could important savings be made. The argument for consolidation of library units, there-

<sup>19</sup> American Library Association, *Bulletin*, XXVIII (1934), 177-94 ("Salaries Number").

fore, must rest on efficiency and better service rather than on actual economies of great importance.

#### THE REGIONAL PROBLEM: THE GEOGRAPHICAL VIEWPOINT

If we consider the regional problem simply as a matter of common sense, its geographical aspects seem to possess the greatest interest and significance. And just as the geography of the country varies from region to region, so the logical and sensible determination of the best library unit will vary accordingly.

*Distance as a factor.*—One fact, however, is common to practically all geographical regions—distance in the modern world must be measured in time rather than in miles. We say tritely that distance has been annihilated, and this much-repeated phrase is almost, if not quite, true. Our governmental units, and consequently most of our libraries, were established in the era of the horse and the dirt road, and are now operating in the era of the automobile and the concrete highway.

In seeking comparisons of distance which are of most interest to the library, several suggestions may be made. The distance of daily commutation in cities commonly runs to twenty-five miles and more by rail and to forty miles and more by motor.<sup>20</sup> Motor delivery by city stores now frequently extends to a radius of thirty to fifty miles.<sup>21</sup> Even the postal-delivery areas of many large cities extend far beyond the municipal boundaries. While figures of this sort apply most directly to the larger cities, the general situation in smaller places is not greatly dissimilar. If such measures of distance are now commonly used to determine the service areas of business, there is no good reason why they may not be regarded as equally important in determining the size of the library unit composed of a central library and outlying branches. The possible application of these and similar units to library conditions should be borne in mind in the survey of typical library areas which follows. An attempt will be made to

<sup>20</sup> R. D. McKenzie, *The Metropolitan Community* (New York, 1933), pp. 86, 88.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

point out the more common library situations and to note how these types affect the possibilities of library organization.

*The metropolitan region.*—Let us consider first the region commonly called the “metropolitan” area or district, of which the United States Census Bureau now formally recognizes ninety-six examples. These enormously complex regions are at once the hope and the despair of the sociologist and the political scientist.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps the most important fact of all which might be mentioned in connection with the metropolitan region is that, with very few exceptions, actual consolidation of satellite communities with the central city has ceased.<sup>23</sup> If unification or correlation of governmental functions of any sort, including libraries, is to be attempted at all, it will probably be futile to wait for the actual complete legal consolidation of units.

*Unified metropolitan service: Cincinnati.*—In its library aspects the metropolitan picture, while somewhat similar in its main outlines, varies greatly from place to place. At least five clearly distinguished situations may be enumerated. The first of these is that in which the major portion of the metropolitan area is served by a single completely unified library system. Apparently no metropolitan area meets this condition fully, and only a few approximate it. Of these, the Public Library of Cincinnati (county library district of Hamilton County) is perhaps the best example. This library serves more people in a single compact and unbroken metropolitan library unit, consisting of the central city and its satellite communities, than any other American library.<sup>24</sup> It is a true county library in the sense that it is administered directly by the county and is supported by a single appropriation covering the entire county as a unit. It is not a city library with county service attached by means of a

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*; C. E. Merriam and others, *Government of the Metropolitan Region of Chicago* (Chicago, 1933); E. S. Griffith, *Current Municipal Problems* (Boston, 1933), pp. 216-48; T. H. Reed, *Municipal Government in the United States* (rev. ed.; New York, 1934), pp. 349-81.

<sup>23</sup> T. H. Reed, in McKenzie, *op. cit.*, pp. 306-7.

<sup>24</sup> The region served, of course, does not include the Kentucky portion of the Cincinnati metropolitan area.



contract. Included in the area served, in addition to the entire city of Cincinnati (population 451,160) are three incorporated cities—Norwood, Cheviot, and St. Bernard—twenty-one incorporated villages, and thirty-seven unincorporated places.

Reference to Map I will show the governmental units served and the major service agencies of the library system. In addition to the branches and general stations shown on the map are many other deposit stations in schools and an extensive system of book-wagon stops. The striking feature of the Cincinnati situation is that all the governmental units in Hamilton County are served by a single centrally administered library system.

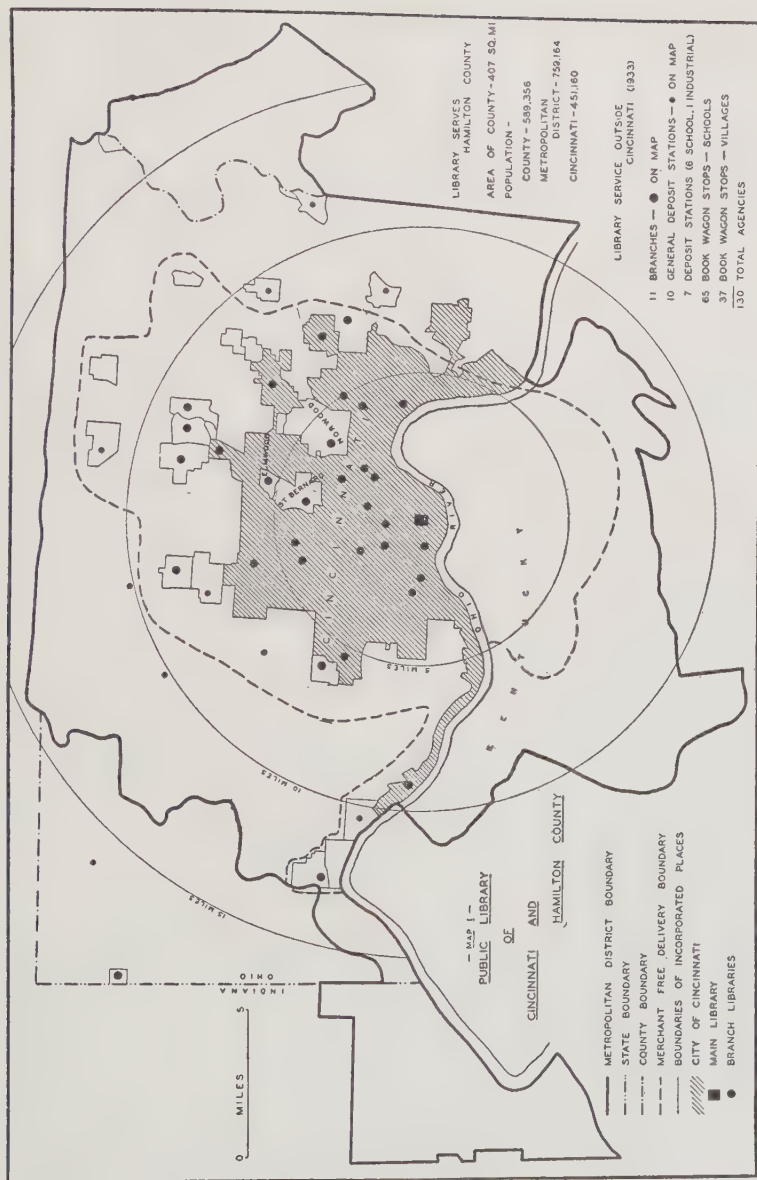
Included in the Cincinnati and Hamilton County library system, for example, is the industrial city of Norwood, with a population of 33,511. This is the largest American city, not itself a county seat, which is served by a branch of a larger library system rather than by its own independent public library. Are units such as Norwood, and its smaller sister-cities of St. Bernard and Cheviot, better or worse off as branches than they might be as independent libraries?

Judged solely by circulation of books and by circulation costs, they have not done badly. The annual circulation per capita for 1933 from the branches which serve these cities was 6.6. To this figure should be added, of course, an unknown amount of adult circulation to residents of the three cities from the central library in Cincinnati.<sup>25</sup> Twenty-seven per cent of their inhabitants are registered as library borrowers at the branches, again with an additional but unknown number at the central library. It is interesting to note that the annual circulation per capita from these branches is almost exactly the same as the median figure (6.8 per capita) for cities of over 30,000 population in the Boston metropolitan area.<sup>26</sup> The book collec-

<sup>25</sup> Regrettably these figures are not matters of record, but this use is probably considerable because of the convenient location of the central library to the downtown business and shopping area.

<sup>26</sup> Cost per capita in Cincinnati is lower than in the Boston area (Cincinnati, \$0.92 in 1933; Boston area, \$1.12 in 1932). Boston data from Massachusetts Board of Free Library Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1932. Cincinnati data from unpublished statistics obtained at the library.





tions in the branches are smaller than normal in independent libraries in cities of the same size, and the amount allocated for branch books is slightly lower than that in independent libraries in similar cities. But in view of the resources of the central library at the disposal of the people of these cities, their situation with respect to the availability of books seems to be rather fortunate.

Two noteworthy features in consolidated libraries of this type must be specially emphasized. In the first place, the library service of the whole region is planned as a single unit, and the available funds are spent as and where a single managing authority directs. Library service does not extend to one municipal boundary, then abruptly change to service by another library, very likely decidedly better or worse, or to no service at all. As far as the users of the library are concerned, municipal boundaries do not exist. Assuming that management is good, there should be a minimum of unnecessary duplication and a maximum amount of correlation of book resources and service.

Second, every citizen of the entire region has at his disposal the complete book collection of the central library, which he may use freely either by visits in person or through requests filed at his branch. It may be said that only in instances such as these is the entire population of a whole metropolitan region able to use the central collection in this manner. The whole situation, it may be pointed out, approximates the use made of a large metropolitan department store by the consumers in the natural trading area of the city. It is to be regretted that such an opportunity exists in so few places in the country. The heavy use of the Cincinnati central library shows what the possibilities might be; unfortunately, a badly overcrowded building is a handicap in taking full advantage of the opportunity.

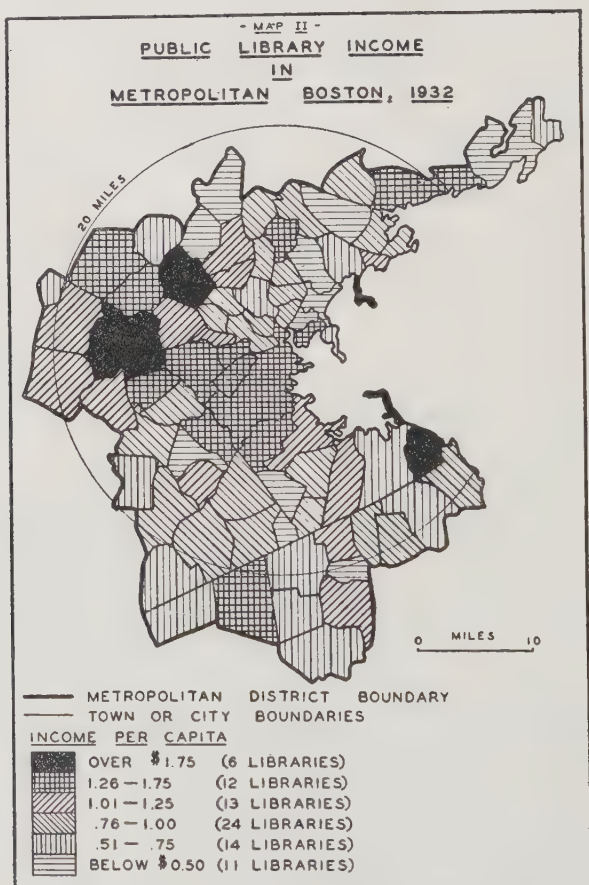
*Complete service through separate libraries: Boston.*—Exactly opposite to the situation just described is that in which the metropolitan area is completely served by a group of entirely separate libraries. Of this, Boston and its eighty satellite cities and towns afford the perfect example. Here it is apparent that the

public library will ordinarily reflect the point of view of its own city. Those cities which wish good library service and can afford it have it; those which cannot afford good service, or do not wish it, get along with less. The same reasons which prevent unification among the municipal units operate to prevent consolidation among the libraries. Neither city nor library wishes to jeopardize its position, if advantageous, to the uncertain possibilities of becoming part of a metropolitan system. Only the less fortunate communities, and their libraries, are likely to be interested in proposals for consolidation.

At least it may be said that there is here no real lack of library service. Every city provides its own according to its own lights and abilities. Local initiative and variation among cities are possible and are encouraged, and strong leadership by able librarians is the rule in many of the satellite communities. Some of these libraries are large enough to provide generously for the usual needs of their own people. If a borrower requires a book not available in the local library, it may be borrowed for him from the State Library in Boston or from another library through the helpful interloan arrangements now possible among the group. If special reference service beyond the resources of the local library is needed, it will be freely given in one of the larger libraries of Boston. All in all, the fortunate library has little to gain by any form of unification and is unlikely to be interested until it sees some real advantage in consolidation.

But one unpleasant fact remains in the background of this picture. It is true that all the eighty cities and towns in the Boston metropolitan district have libraries and that their citizens are receiving library service. Behind this generalization, however, there is found the greatest possible inequality and variation in what is meant by library service. Between the best supported and the most poorly supported of the public libraries in this region the difference in per capita cost of library maintenance is as 13 to 1. Eleven of these towns in 1932 spent less than \$0.50 per capita on libraries, while six spent more than \$1.75 per capita. A graphic picture of this great variation in library ex-

penditures may be seen in Map II. Very plainly, library service to all the people does not mean equal service to all people, or anything remotely approaching it.



Only slightly different from the situation just described is that to be observed in other metropolitan areas in which most, but not all, of the satellite communities are served by separate libraries. This applies to that marvelous aggregation of 384 cities, counties, and townships which make up what is some-

times called "Chicagoland."<sup>27</sup> The only new feature here is that library service is absolutely lacking in some of the units, with a total population of about 300,000 out of almost 5,000,000 people in the region.<sup>28</sup>

*Service by city libraries and county libraries: Detroit.*—Still another variation in the metropolitan picture may be observed when a county library is introduced. There is then a tripartite system of public library service in the same region: the library of the central city, the county library, and the independent libraries of the suburban cities, each with their branches. Detroit and Los Angeles are outstanding examples of this type of situation. In the Los Angeles region, all the people in the area are served by one or the other of these libraries, but the general picture is extremely complicated and geographically intermingled. Moreover, to the three public library systems should be added a fourth, the school libraries of the region. Los Angeles and several of the satellite cities each have their own school-library systems, and practically all the suburban cities and towns also have their own separate school libraries.

Let us single out the libraries of the Detroit region for somewhat more detailed examination as an example of this mixed type of library service.<sup>29</sup> A radius of fifty miles, such as that used for the studies of the metropolitan region of Chicago, would roughly extend considerably beyond Ann Arbor to the west, to the boundaries of the Flint metropolitan area on the north, and to the Ohio line on the south. It would also introduce the interesting question of extending library service beyond the boundaries of a nation, for the border cities and western portion of Ontario are clearly within the Detroit area and influence. However, we may content ourselves with a very conservative conception of the region, including in it merely Wayne County

<sup>27</sup> Merriam, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102. A portion of this area, the Gary sector, may be observed in Map V, on p. 290.

<sup>29</sup> L. D. Fyan, "Trends in Government That Affect County and Regional Libraries," American Library Association, *Bulletin*, XXVII (1933), 693-99.



and the three southern tiers of townships in Oakland and Macomb counties, both lying to the north. This region includes the following array of library agencies:

I. Public libraries

A. In Detroit (Detroit Public Library)

Main library

Downtown library

Eighteen branches and various other agencies

B. Outside Detroit

The Wayne County Library Service

Fourteen county branches

Fourteen county stations

Ten independent municipal public libraries

Five independent school-district public libraries

One independent township library

Two association libraries giving free service

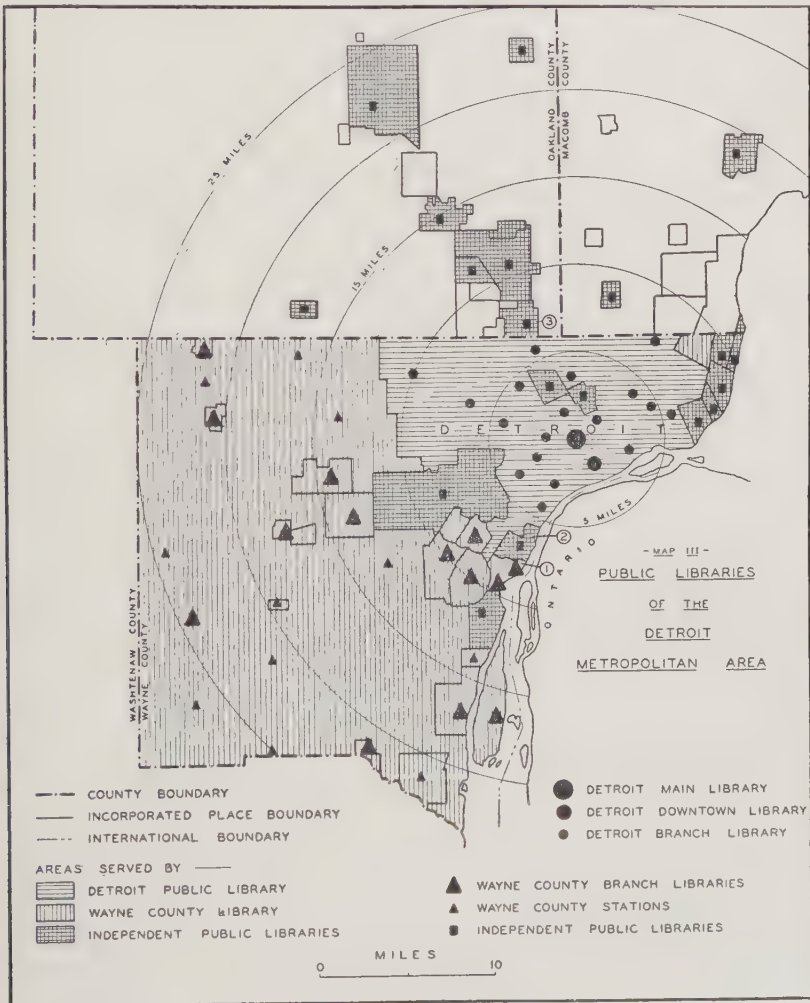
II. School libraries

An entirely separate system of high-school, junior high-school, and elementary-school libraries in Detroit

Separate school libraries in many of the school systems outside of Detroit

A glance at Map III, on which the governmental and public library units are indicated, will show how hopelessly and illogically these various agencies are intermingled. For example, a family residing in the village of Ecorse (see point No. 1 on the map) receives its library service from the branch of the Wayne County Library in that village, which is supported by an appropriation from the general funds of Wayne County, which in turn comes from the pockets of all the taxpayers of the whole county. If the same family moves a mile or two north to the city of River Rouge (point No. 2 on the map), it is served by the school and public library of the River Rouge school district, which is supported from the general funds of that school district. Still another short move to the north and the family finds itself within the city limits of Detroit and served by the Campbell branch of the Detroit Public Library, which is supported by an appropriation from the general fund of the city. Here the whole resources of the Detroit library system are available. All the time, of

course, it is the same family and its library needs are exactly the same.



Less fortunate is the resident in the southeast corner of Royal Oak Township, in Oakland County, immediately north of Detroit, who receives no library service whatever (point No. 3 on

the map). A step to the south, across an imaginary line, would entitle him to use the Detroit Public Library system. A step to the west across another imaginary line would entitle him to use the recently established and struggling Ferndale Public Library. A move of a mile and a half to the east would bring him into Macomb County, where he would still be without library service.

The school libraries of this region are largely, though not wholly, separately administered. In the school-district libraries, school and public library service is generally unified; in Wayne County, the county library co-operates actively with all the schools. But, aside from these exceptions, the important schools throughout the area all have their own separate libraries. The Detroit school-library system, it should be added, is one of the most extensive in the country.<sup>30</sup>

From the point of view of the men, women, and children who are the users, or the potential users, of the libraries in the Detroit metropolitan area, the final result is a crazy-quilt of complexity and inequality. Good library service, indifferent service, poor service, and no service at all are indiscriminately intermingled. The librarians and the library authorities of the region are not to blame for the situation; they are merely the victims of an uncorrelated system of political units.

Even the tax system is involved, and double taxation is a factor in the Wayne County portion of the region. Since the city of Detroit pays 79 per cent of the property taxes in Wayne County, and the county library is supported from the general funds of the county, not by taxation of the units it serves alone, it is fair to say that Detroit pays three-fourths of the cost of operating a county library entirely outside its boundaries.<sup>31</sup> Even though the Wayne County Library Service and the Detroit Public Library are administratively closely connected, a comprehensive and completely unified library plan for all the libraries and all

<sup>30</sup> Marion Lovis, "Supervision of School Libraries—Detroit," in American Library Association, *School Library Yearbook*, II (1928), 108-116.

<sup>31</sup> Fyan, *op. cit.*, p. 697.

the people in the region is scarcely possible under existing conditions.

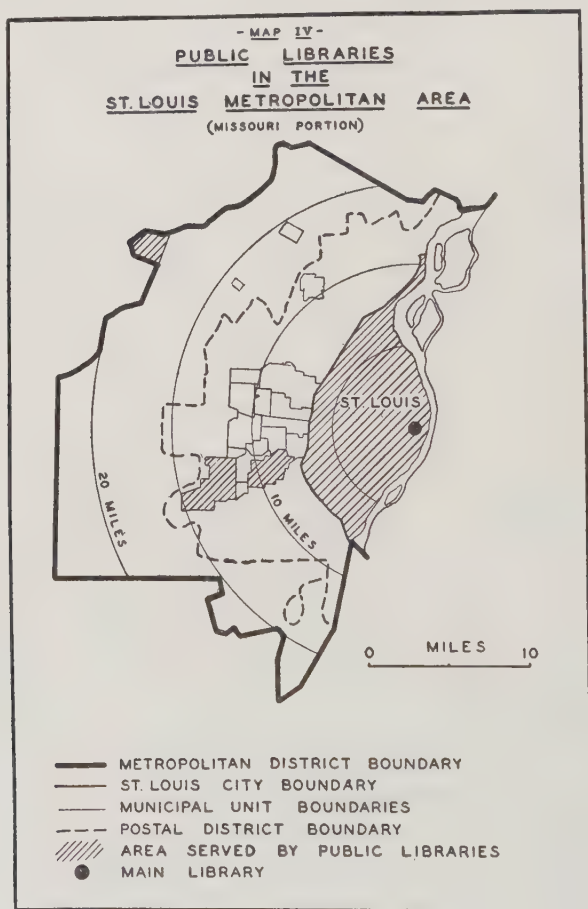
*The library in the suburban city.*—In all the metropolitan regions which have thus far been mentioned, there is apparent the greatest possible variation in the quality of library service provided by the numerous satellite communities. In a great many of them is found that typical phenomenon of the American library scene, the highly successful and usually well-administered library of the wealthy or well-to-do suburban city. Almost invariably these libraries stand out in any statistical array with high records of per capita circulation, per capita support,<sup>32</sup> and in all the usual library standards. Situated as they are in cities of considerable wealth (sometimes relatively greater than the wealth of the central city),<sup>33</sup> with a naturally good reading clientèle, able to shift the responsibility for collecting certain types of books and periodicals to other institutions in the metropolitan area, and therefore permitted to concentrate rather closely on the special reading interests and needs of their own communities, these libraries are indeed fortunate. At the other extreme is the picture (less often found in tables of comparative statistics!) of the library in the financially embarrassed or decadent suburban town or city, where conditions are quite different from those just described. It would be an act of pure malice to reduce library service in the more fortunate cities—no one wishes to do so. The problem is to find a way to build up the service in the less favored communities without leveling it down in the others.

*Regions with few outlying libraries: St. Louis.*—Finally, there are metropolitan areas in which library service outside the central city, instead of being perhaps relatively better than that of the principal library in the region, is almost wholly lacking. This situation is found in very marked form in the St. Louis metropolitan area, one in which the city has recently tried unsuccessfully to extend its boundaries by formal legal annexation.

<sup>32</sup> See, e.g., the annual "Salaries Number" of the *Bulletin* of the American Library Association.

<sup>33</sup> Griffith, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

In this region only one-fourth of the people outside the limits of St. Louis have public library service, which is given in only three cities, Kirkwood, Webster Groves, and St. Charles, out of



twenty-one incorporated places in the area. The political and library units in the Missouri portion of the St. Louis area are shown on Map IV. A place as large as University City, for example, with over twenty-five thousand inhabitants, seems quite content to do without its own library. This condition was in



part due to the fact that the St. Louis Public Library for many years (until 1932) very generously allowed the inhabitants of the suburban towns to register as library borrowers without a non-resident fee. Under such circumstances it was only too easy to shift the burden to the large central city. The large number of non-resident borrowers built up under this practice dropped to less than one-sixth of its former total when a \$2.00 non-resident fee was imposed.<sup>34</sup> There seems to be little doubt that similar generosity has been in part responsible for the failure of library development in other metropolitan areas.<sup>35</sup>

*Minor urban-rural groups.*—The metropolitan-area situation repeats itself, in pattern at least, in innumerable places throughout the country, for every city and village is a "metropolis" to its surrounding territory. Since the public library has been so generally confined to incorporated places, library service has ordinarily stopped more or less definitely at the village or city limits. This fact accounts in large measure for the millions of people who are now without library service of any direct sort.

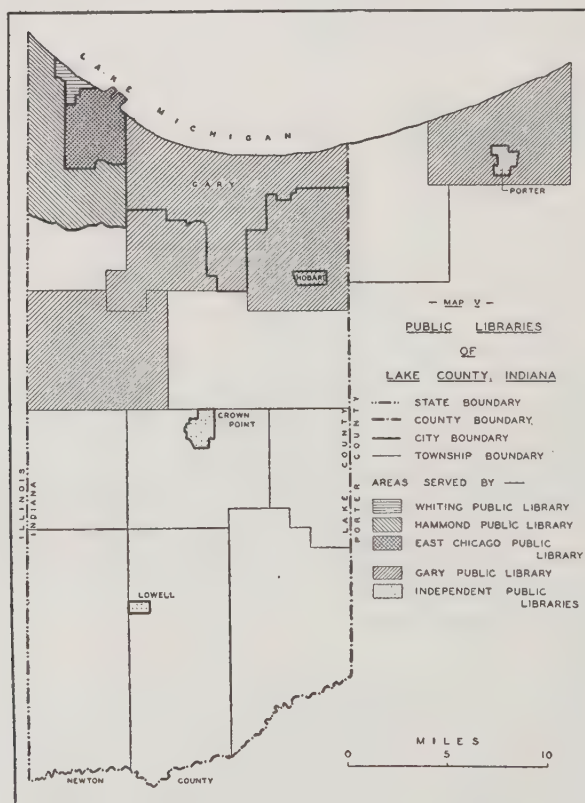
The New England town has provided the only really complete answer to this condition in terms of strictly local units. In New England, except in a relatively small number of instances in Vermont and Maine, the village is not separately incorporated but remains a part of the town. The town, therefore, may include within its boundaries urban, semi-urban, and rural areas, but all persons residing within its limits are entitled to library service on equal terms. Stated more concretely, this means that the people of a small region averaging twenty-three square miles in area in Massachusetts and Connecticut, and slightly more in the other New England states, are served by the library or libraries of the town.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Number of non-resident borrowers estimated at 15,000 in 1932. After imposition of fee, dropped to about 2,000. Information obtained at library.

<sup>35</sup> Pittsburgh and Philadelphia seem to be examples of this situation.

<sup>36</sup> J. F. Sly, "State and Local Government in New England," in American Geographical Society, *New England's Prospect: 1933* (New York, 1933), pp. 415-30; Bromage, *op. cit.*, p. 38. Vermont has seventy incorporated villages, and Massachusetts often has more than one library in a town.

The township libraries in some of the middle western states and in New York have accomplished the same purpose to a more limited extent. One of the most successful methods of combining urban and rural areas is made possible by the Indiana law permitting townships to join with libraries in neighboring cities.



The township votes a library tax (usually about half the city rate) for this purpose and is given representation on the managing board of the combined library.<sup>37</sup> A total of twenty-four such combinations are now in force in the state. An interesting example of this plan in operation is shown in Map V, where the

<sup>37</sup> Burns' *Annotated Indiana Code*, 1926, secs. 9672-73.

service given by the Gary Public Library to several neighboring townships is indicated. It is especially interesting to note that one of the townships is not contiguous to the city (in fact, is outside the county), and that the village of Porter in that township has its own separate library. From the point of view of long-range possibilities, the combination of library units in Lake County is clearly in an elementary stage.

Turning now to a state-wide view of the question of larger service areas for public library systems, we may distinguish several geographic types which are of significance in estimating the possibilities of increasing the size of the library unit.

*States with practically complete library service.*—First we may consider those states in which all, or very nearly all, of the people live in areas in which there is public library service. The two outstanding examples in this group are Massachusetts and California, which have achieved the same result by widely different methods. In Massachusetts 410 public libraries give service to every one of the 355 municipal units in the state (39 cities and 316 towns). The method followed is that of completely localized service, supplemented by vigorous assistance from the State Library Commission. Practically the same situation is found throughout New England except in the single state of Maine. In all these states, obviously the question is only very slightly a matter of extension of service to new territory but is rather one of possible combinations of existing units. The map of the Boston metropolitan district (Map II), already commented on in another connection, illustrates clearly the distribution of library units in Massachusetts and other New England states.

California, on the other hand, is the outstanding example of the triumph of the county library in making possible almost complete service to all the people in the state. Library service is given in California by 46 county libraries and 217 additional libraries, of which nearly a third are affiliated with county systems. The whole state, it should be emphasized, is served, not by a single system, but by a combination of county and municipal libraries. New Jersey is close behind California in the pro-

portion of its population served by libraries and has followed the same combination method.

In both of these states many of the county libraries serve only those portions of the counties which lie outside the boundaries of the principal cities and towns. Again the problem is not primarily one of extension, but is instead the much more difficult one of the possible combination of city and county units. Soon or later, this question must be frankly faced. That the combination of all library service within a county in a unitary system will work satisfactorily has been amply demonstrated in the large and important counties of Kern and Fresno in California.

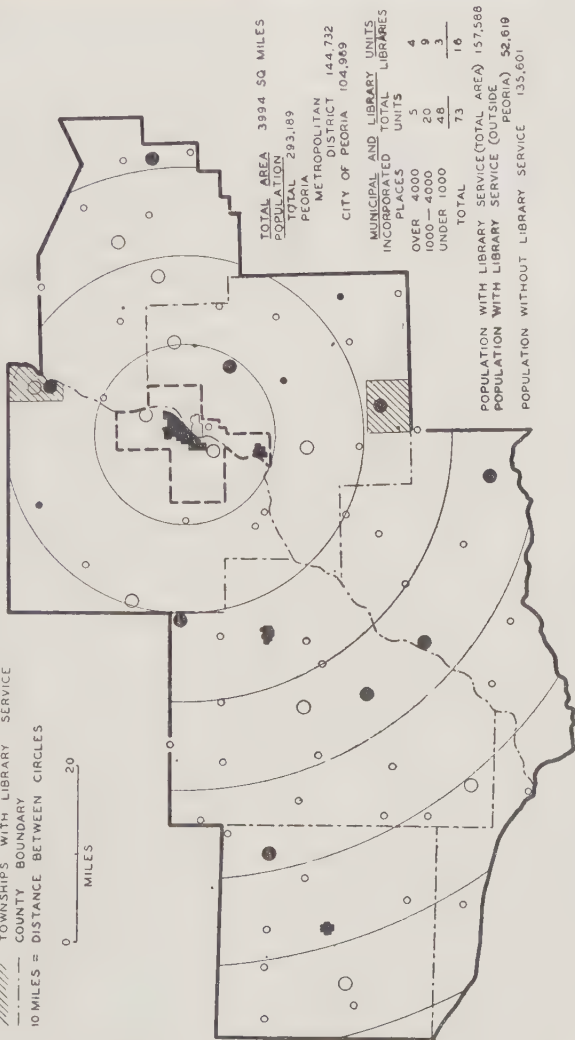
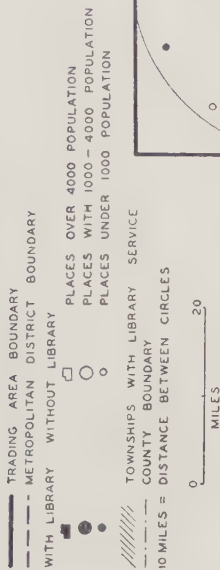
*States partially served by libraries.*—The large majority of the American states, unlike the examples just described, are only partially covered by the library network. Within this large group there are wide variations in the proportion of the population served. It is generally known, for instance, that two-thirds of the people in the southern states are without public libraries and that libraries in that region are mostly concentrated in the relatively small number of cities and larger towns. But it is probably more of a surprise to note that in as good a library state as Illinois, 46 per cent of the people outside of Chicago are without direct library service, or that the proportion for Pennsylvania outside of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh is 62 per cent, or for New York outside of New York City 28 per cent.<sup>38</sup> These facts indicate very clearly that library extension today is a rural and small-town problem and emphasize the necessity of the selection of a unit which will satisfactorily provide service to these areas in connection with the cities already supplied with libraries. Whether this unit will be the available and generally accepted county or some other is the most important governmental question facing the libraries of these states today.

A typical example of the situation just described may be observed in Map VI, in which the existing libraries in the Peoria trading area are shown. Both the conspicuous lack of library

<sup>38</sup> "Contrasts in Library Service," American Library Association, *Bulletin*, XXIX (1935), 249-55.

- MAP VI -  
PUBLIC LIBRARIES

IN THE  
PEORIA TRADING AREA



TOTAL AREA 3994 SQ MILES  
POPULATION  
TOTAL 293,189

PEORIA METROPOLITAN  
DISTRICT 144,732  
CITY OF PEORIA 104,969

MUNICIPAL AND LIBRARY UNITS  
INCORPORATED TOTAL LIBRARIES  
PLACES UNITS  
OVER 4000 4  
1000 - 4000 5  
UNDER 1000 3  
TOTAL 73

POPULATION WITH LIBRARY SERVICE (TOTAL AREA) 157,588  
POPULATION WITH LIBRARY SERVICE (OUTSIDE PEORIA) 52,619  
POPULATION WITHOUT LIBRARY SERVICE 135,601



service throughout the area and the clearly dominant position of Peoria as the library, as well as the business, center are sufficiently obvious.

In this connection it is vital to note clearly a few facts so simple that their mere statement affords an important clue to the conclusions that must almost inevitably be reached. First, in many states the typical county is small in area, in population, and in wealth. This is generally true of the South as a region.<sup>39</sup> The average area of a Georgia county is 365 square miles, less than a seventh the size of an average California county. If this area is put in the form of a circle, the radius will be only 11 miles in length. Moreover, two-fifths of the Georgia counties have less than 10,000 population, and three-fifths have no towns of over 2,500 people—in other words, are completely “rural” according to the census definition. In Tennessee the average county area is somewhat larger, 439 square miles, but 60 per cent of the counties are rural. Throughout the country as a whole two-thirds of the counties have no city or town of over 5,000 population.<sup>40</sup>

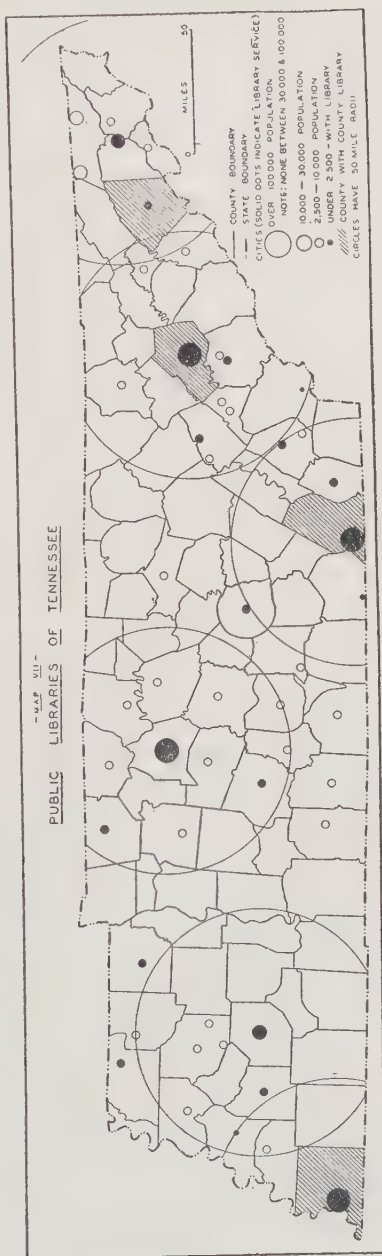
Under circumstances such as these, which might be amplified at great length, the struggle to establish systems of independent county libraries seems almost literally hopeless, simply because the unit in many cases is too small and too weak to permit of the establishment of effective libraries. In Georgia today there are 161 counties, but only 53 public libraries, including a few small county libraries. Of these libraries only 11 have more than 10,000 volumes. It seems clear that some larger unit than the county must be sought which will permit the natural grouping of library service around the larger cities in which the existing book resources and the competent library personnel are concentrated. In a sense the very fact that libraries are relatively undeveloped in the southern region is fortunate. There are comparatively few important vested library interests which are in

<sup>39</sup> J. A. Fairlie, “County Government, United States,” in *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, IV (1931), 505.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

conflict, and it is possible to plan systematically for a library system based on sound sociological, geographical, and governmental principles. Map VII shows the public libraries, cities, and counties of a typical southern state—Tennessee. The emphatic geographic point in this map is that the great mass of the state's area falls within a radius of fifty miles of the six principal cities. Further, the possibilities of the dominance of the four largest cities, with the four largest libraries, are most impressive. And the complete absence of library service in most of the counties is evident.

A quite different situation prevails throughout the West. There the counties are large in area but often rather sparsely populated. From the point of view of size, the county in this region is a much more reasonable unit for library service, although size is by no means always combined with taxable wealth. There seems very good reason to believe that the successful development of county libraries in California and in parts of the West has been partly due to the fact that the units are generally large enough



to afford the necessary background in population and taxing values.

Finally, it may be pointed out that certain regions in the country, of which the cutover lands of Michigan are a good example, are so sparsely populated and so lacking in economic resources that it is practically beyond the realm of possibility to think of providing library service of any direct sort for them. The "full measure of governmental services" cannot be supplied "to the last outposts" in regions such as these.<sup>41</sup>

*A single state library unit.*—The idea of regionalism in library service may be pushed so far as to make the whole state a unit. By this suggestion is not meant state supervision of separate local units, but actual operation of all the libraries of the state as a single unified organization, directed by one central authority. In general, this idea probably smacks too much of bureaucracy to appeal to the average American town or city. There are, however, at least two states in which it appears to be a very definite possibility.

These, it may easily be conjectured, are Delaware and Rhode Island, the two smallest states in the Union, with territorial areas of 2,370 square miles and 1,248 square miles, respectively. Rhode Island is smaller in size than 36 of the 58 California counties, and Delaware than 22. The distance from Providence, the natural center in Rhode Island, to the most distant point in the state is but 41 miles. From Wilmington the highway distance to the southern boundary of Delaware is but 79 miles. From the viewpoint of mere territorial size the development of a Rhode Island Public Library, or a Delaware Public Library, each with its appropriate and necessary branches and stations, is entirely within the realm of reason and common sense.

In Delaware library service is already largely in the hands of two authorities, the Wilmington Institute Free Library, the only important public library in the state, and the State Library Commission. The former organization controls through its

<sup>41</sup> Michigan, State Commission of Inquiry into County, Township and School District Government, *Preliminary Report* (1932), p. 22.

board the New Castle County Library, which serves the most populous of Delaware's three counties. The Library Commission, with its book trucks, is now giving direct service to families on many regular routes in the other two counties. In addition to these two major units there are about a dozen small independent libraries, several of which receive direct state aid.<sup>42</sup> Complete consolidation is only slightly removed, and would appear to be a logical and intelligent step.<sup>43</sup>

Rhode Island, like Delaware, has a single dominant city, Providence, and a single outstanding public library. The central location of the city and the excellence of the library make an ideal combination for easy access to the whole state. At one time, when no non-resident registration fee was charged, Providence had as many as 15,000 non-resident borrowers, with representatives from practically every one of the 39 municipal units of the state.<sup>44</sup> From the point of view of the potential user of a unified public library system for the state, with completely equalized service, the suggested scheme would possess many advantages. Whether his New England love of local self-government would permit him to accept such a plan is perhaps another story. As a matter of law and organization, consolidation would present certain difficulties, but these might be overcome if sufficient representation on the board of management were given to communities outside of Providence.

Rather curiously, a similar suggestion may be made in the case of certain states which are large in area but sparsely populated. Obvious examples are New Mexico and Arizona. In these states it may be more feasible to develop branches of the state library throughout the state rather than attempt to build up county or other locally governed units. A proposal of this sort has recently been made as a part of a library plan for New Mexico.

<sup>42</sup> Delaware State Library Commission, *Biennial Report*, 1931-32.

<sup>43</sup> Headquarters for such a library would be at Wilmington, with an important regional distributing center at Dover.

<sup>44</sup> Information from the librarian, C. E. Sherman; see also M. H. James, *Sociological Study of the Providence Public Library* (Providence, 1926), pp. 51-52.

*Crossing state boundaries.*—One does not go far in a study of any phase of regionalism without coming to a state boundary. To the potential user of a library the state line is merely a place on the map. To the Pennsylvania market gardeners who sell their produce in Wilmington, Delaware, the desire to use the library of that city is as natural as it is to use its stores and banks. To the countless thousands of New Jersey commuters the libraries of New York are as potentially valuable as many of the other attractions of the metropolis. Similar situations are found in Cincinnati, in Chicago, in Portland (Ore.), in St. Louis, and in many other cities throughout the country. No means of meeting such a situation by legal consolidation of units has yet been devised or is perhaps likely in the near future. But contractual relations for library service are a possibility and have actually been proposed between Texarkana, Arkansas, and Texarkana, Texas. The eventual necessity of this sort of combination is becoming more and more patent.

#### THE REGIONAL PROBLEM: LIBRARY ASPECTS

The possibilities of regional developments among libraries have now been considered from the standpoints of government and of geography. The subject must still be approached briefly from the narrower viewpoint of the library itself.

*Library individualism.*—The individualistic history of the library as an institution seems to have made the librarian an individualist in his own philosophy, an attitude which the trustee has usually adopted as well. Typically, he loves to do a small, neat job in a workman-like manner, without going too far afield. He was aroused to effective united action during the World War, but he could not be stirred to continued interest in the enlarged-program campaign which followed. While intensely concerned about the work of other libraries, his interest seems to be actuated by a desire to apply what he learns to his own situation. The result is a desire to improve and consolidate the position of the particular library he is directing. In this attitude he



is strongly supported by his trustees and by the local patriotism of his community.

This is not meant as an indictment of the library interests for selfishness. It is rather an attempt to point out the tremendous absorption of the librarian in his own local problems. As yet the possibilities of a more tightly integrated and unified library movement have not made themselves fully evident. The question of regionalism, therefore, is not at the moment keenly interesting to a great many library authorities. Enlightened self-interest certainly cannot be condemned, but it may be suggested that the trustee and the librarian who too earnestly defend the positions of the individual units for which they are responsible may in the long run defeat their own best interests.

The extent to which individualism is sometimes carried in library organization may be illustrated by pointing to the number of instances in which a single city has more than one public library. The city of Cranston, Rhode Island, is served by no less than six entirely separately administered libraries. As everyone knows, New York City has three public library systems for its five boroughs. Other cities which have more than one public library are Norwalk, Connecticut; Bay City, Michigan; Everett, Massachusetts; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Evansville, Indiana; Chester, Pennsylvania; and Macon, Georgia. These duplications are due to consolidations of municipalities which were not accompanied by similar library consolidations, or to special legal conditions imposed by donors. A small group of southern cities, including Savannah, Georgia, and Greensboro, Asheville, Durham, and Wilmington, North Carolina, have separately administered libraries for negroes. These are not merely branches or separate agencies but entirely independent entities, managed by their own trustees. Experienced southern library workers feel that such administrative separation is not the best plan, but that all the libraries of a city should be administered by a single board. The large population of New York may constitute an ample reason for more than a single library unit in that city, but

the existence of separate libraries in small cities seems unfortunate, to say the least.

*Service to non-residents.*—The attitude adopted by library authorities with respect to the question of service to readers who live outside the city or town boundaries is of interest and importance in this connection. Two widely varying theories have developed in the framing of library policies on this point. The first of these may be labeled the “big brother” theory, and is best described as a policy of more or less complete generosity on the part of the library to all comers, regardless of their residence. This attitude is perhaps only part of the general effort commonly made by any urban center, large or small, to make itself attractive to the people in its hinterland. Not many libraries have been able to pursue this policy at all thoroughly, and the number is now, under financial stress, rapidly decreasing. Many of the libraries in New York, for instance, have been authorized by their charters from the State Education Department to extend service to the surrounding rural communities. Generally when liberal rules of this sort are still followed, they are not widely advertised. Of course, many libraries allow all persons engaged in business or employed in a city to register as borrowers, and this accounts for many non-resident users.

In general, however, what may be designated as the *quid pro quo* theory is now definitely in the ascendant in the granting of circulation privileges to non-residents. Beginning with a modest fee of one dollar a year for this privilege, there is now apparent a very general trend toward a higher fee, very often three dollars, based on the average cost of library service per registered borrower. As a matter of simple justice to the city and the library which provide this service, the imposition of a fee of this amount is in every sense reasonable and defensible. Almost invariably, however, the adoption of such a rule has resulted in a drastic reduction in the number of registrants.<sup>45</sup> The reading interests of many possible users of the library and the financial interests of the library are thus in sharp conflict. It is probably impossible

<sup>45</sup> See above, p. 289.

to expect one governmental unit to give free service in any large amount to persons who live in another unit; yet the imposition of a really adequate fee seems to result only in the elimination of most of the potential service which might be given.

In one respect, however, libraries are almost universally generous; they ordinarily give reference service freely to all comers, whether residents or not. The only restrictions of this kind which are a matter of record are those connected with the use of libraries by students.<sup>46</sup>

In a sense it is rather curious that this sharp distinction in the attitude of the library toward circulation and reference service to non-residents has developed. The simple explanation may be made that the mechanics of registration and circulation make it relatively easy to charge a fee—a situation which does not hold good in reference service. However, if all the costs which really lie behind the ability of a library to give adequate reference service were to be calculated, it is certain that the free reference service offered by many libraries would be found to be a very expensive item. In many respects, these costs bear little relation to the actual time spent in assisting readers. Before any reader asks a question the costs are present. They are more nearly comparable to the “ready-to-serve” charges imposed by public utility corporations, but any attempt to distribute them to non-resident users of the library would probably be futile.

*Difficulties in consolidation.*—The technical difficulties involved in the consolidation of separate library units, readily apparent to the librarian but usually not considered by the layman or administrator, are often very great. The absorption of even a small unit may involve an immense amount of work in adjusting catalogs, classification, the charging system, and the rules and regulations for registration and circulation. If, for instance, the libraries in any metropolitan area were suddenly united by governmental fiat, a tremendous overhauling and adjustment of existing records of all sorts would immediately become necessary. Moreover, certain rather fundamental questions of policy

<sup>46</sup> New York Public Library, *Report*, 1933, p. 24.

with respect to the rules and regulations concerning the registration of borrowers and the circulation of books might be raised. Readers' privileges, formerly enjoyed in some of the smaller independent libraries, might necessarily be reduced in some instances. In general, a period of considerable confusion, distressing to librarians and readers alike, would very likely ensue. All in all, these technical problems make sweeping consolidations among existing library units much more difficult of accomplishment than may appear at first thought and may actually be of much importance in defeating any plan for consolidation.

In the last analysis the librarian of many a smoothly running small or medium-sized library is frankly skeptical about becoming part of a larger unit. The machinery of the smaller unit is less complicated, more easily and quickly operated than the necessarily more elaborate mechanism of the large institution. Library units, like many other units, are likely to reach a point in size where the law of diminishing returns begins to operate. Many librarians would be perfectly willing to paraphrase in terms of libraries and volumes Lord Bryce's statement that 500,000 people were too many for an ideal city and that a city of over 1,000,000 was an "administrative incubus." There is enough common sense in such an attitude to give pause to over-hasty considerations of mergers involving units of large size. Objections of this sort, however, actually become operative only in relatively large libraries and probably would not be met with in the great majority of combinations which might be made. Up to the point at which mere bulk becomes a serious administrative problem, the library should gain more in strength and effectiveness by unification than it loses in mobility.

#### CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted nothing more ambitious than the statement of some of the outstanding elements in the problem of library regionalism. Every aspect of the matter bristles with difficulties. Either as a question of government in general, or of

the library in particular, as a small part of government, obstacles to progress are only too apparent. The next chapter will be concerned with suggestions looking toward the solution of the problem. Certain it is that only through the united interest of all concerned—administrators, library trustees, librarians, and the public for whom library service is maintained—is any progress in this direction possible. Whatever the difficulties, we may conclude with the question: Is it not possible so to organize at least one governmental activity that it may be able to serve the people generally in a rational and unified manner?



## CHAPTER X

### THE REGIONAL PROBLEM: SUGGESTIONS FOR ITS SOLUTION

THE usual end of most analyses similar to this consideration of regionalism as a library problem is a question mark rather than a period. If the discussion of the subject in the preceding chapter has seemed to uncover more difficulties than possibilities of accomplishment, it is merely in line with the general trend of most investigations looking toward changes in governmental structure. Some of the difficulties involved in any comprehensive scheme for the enlargement of the library unit should, very likely, be viewed more or less as dilemmas which must be endured or ameliorated rather than wholly solved.<sup>1</sup> But in spite of hard facts and with all due respect for the necessities of a realistic point of view, it should be possible to make some progress in this direction. The plan of the present chapter will be, first, to point out briefly what has been done or may be done without radical change in the present library structure; next, to attempt the formulation of a number of guiding principles which may be of assistance in the future consideration of the problem; and, finally, to make definite suggestions for the governmental organization of regional libraries.

#### THE REGIONAL PROBLEM: IMPROVEMENTS WITHOUT STRUCTURAL CHANGE

Much has been accomplished, and much more may be accomplished, in the direction of reducing the difficulties connected with a system of small library units, such as that found in most American states today. Even under the most favorable conditions, organic changes in the status of libraries are made with

<sup>1</sup> See E. S. Griffith on the metropolitan question in his *Current Municipal Problems* (Boston, 1933), p. 219.

difficulty, and opportunities for comprehensive new legislation present themselves infrequently. Meanwhile, the library system still exists; can anything be done to improve conditions?

*Stimulating the work of the local library.*—Generalizing, we may say that the work which has been best done in this field has been the stimulation of the existing small libraries. Library extension workers in many states have labored tirelessly and efficiently to this end. Essentially of this type was the recent experiment carried out in twenty towns in the three counties of northwestern Vermont under the general oversight of a committee of the Vermont Commission on Country Life, and financed by the Carnegie Corporation.<sup>2</sup> This experiment did not contemplate the combination of the library units in any formal manner, but rather was directed at aiding and stimulating the work already being done by the existing town libraries. If such a central organization could be maintained permanently for the general oversight of a group of libraries, the work of the local units would be greatly improved. Although the central office has no actual administrative authority over the towns in the area, many of the results expected of a regional system might be achieved informally.

A somewhat similar plan was at one time carried out by the Massachusetts Board of Free Public Library Commissioners. Agents of the Commission were assigned to work with the libraries of a particular region, and a few strategically located libraries were designated as centers for reference and interloan purposes, the Commission paying a certain amount as a sort of blanket non-resident fee, which permitted residents of nearby towns to use the library designated as the regional center at will.<sup>3</sup>

*Voluntary co-operation.*—For those cities or towns which are frankly skeptical about any formal scheme for the formation of larger library units, or in regions in which the plan is impossible

<sup>2</sup> K. H. Wead, "Vermont's Regional Library Experiment," *Wilson Bulletin*, VII (1933), 482-87.

<sup>3</sup> Massachusetts Free Public Library Commission, *Report*, 1913, pp. 15, 23; 1914, p. 14; 1915, p. 20; 1916, p. 12.

because of legal or other reasons, some kind of voluntary co-operation is clearly indicated. In spite of a few rather outstanding examples to the contrary, the possibilities of a thorough-going system of voluntary co-operation among libraries in metropolitan areas or other natural regions have not been adequately explored in America.

The common method of co-operation among libraries is that of interloan of books to meet special requests. Examples of the successful development of this system are to be found in Massachusetts, especially among the libraries in the Boston metropolitan region, and also among the suburban libraries in northern New Jersey, as well as in many other places. An essential feature in the full development of an adequate interloan system is the building-up of union catalogs of the holdings of the libraries of a particular region or state. The union catalog of books in California libraries maintained by the California State Library is an example of an effort to meet this need on a state-wide basis. For the most successful comprehensive scheme of this sort, however, we must go to the "regional library bureau" as developed extensively in England in recent years.<sup>4</sup> In essence this is a plan for the free interloan of books through an integrated system, ranging from the smallest libraries to the National Central Library, and utilizing the union catalogs compiled at certain regional centers as the essential working tools in the scheme.

Co-operation in book selection is another promising possibility. Of this there are at least two interesting examples in the United States. Perhaps the best known is the Book Review Club of Greater Boston, which is attended by representatives of most of the libraries in the Boston area. Regular meetings are held and representatives of all the libraries participate jointly in the reviewing of books.<sup>5</sup> The publication of a regular bulletin is

<sup>4</sup> J. M. Mitchell, "The Library Movement in Great Britain," American Library Association, *Bulletin*, XXVI (1932), 474-78; *Year's Work in Librarianship* (London, 1928-33).

<sup>5</sup> G. H. Evans, "The Boston Book Review Club," *Library Journal*, LVI (1931), 945-47.

another valuable activity of the Club. In Cleveland, similarly, it has long been the custom for the librarians of suburban libraries to attend the regular book-selection meetings of the Cleveland Public Library. A plan such as this not only saves much time for the individual libraries in the actual reviewing of books, but also assists greatly in the development of a correlated policy in book-buying.

A few experiments have also been made in the direction of regional planning and co-ordination in the field of reference service.<sup>6</sup> Usually, however, this aspect of library co-operation is left largely to the individual initiative of readers and reference librarians and is not planned on a comprehensive scale.

In passing it may be suggested that co-operation of the various types just mentioned need not be confined to libraries of the same least common denominator—that is to say, to public libraries. College and public libraries in the same cities or towns, for instance, and special libraries of all sorts, may be associated in such plans. This has been a noteworthy feature in the English regional bureau system.

Beyond this point co-operation has not often gone. There seems to be a real need for energetic experimentation in this direction, which might produce unexpectedly important results. The idea of joint purchasing of books, and possibly of certain supplies as well, at one time seemed more promising than it does at present, when discounts are more or less standardized. Some savings might still be made, and important assistance might be given by a joint book-buying agency in the purchase of out-of-print and foreign books. Co-operative purchasing for college libraries, carried out under the direction of the Carnegie Corporation's Advisory Group on College Libraries, is a valuable example of the possibilities in this field.<sup>7</sup> Binding pools among small libraries have been suggested in Michigan and other states, and

<sup>6</sup> Montclair, N.J., has been active in this connection.

<sup>7</sup> W. W. Bishop, "The Advisory Group on College Libraries of the Carnegie Corporation," American Library Association, *College and Reference Library Yearbook*, No. 3 (1931), pp. 34-42.

the mere threat of their organization has in one or two instances resulted in price reductions.

The development of a central pool of circulating books, emphasizing especially expensive or unusual titles which individual libraries are unable to purchase for themselves, is also worth trying. State library collections cover this field somewhat but not always with sufficient completeness and timeliness. It is at this point that the book collections of many libraries begin to break down seriously, and some aid from outside sources is urgently needed.

If really complete co-operation is desired, it would be possible for a group of libraries to adopt a uniform charging system, with central registration, permitting direct use of all libraries in the region by any borrower without resorting to the machinery of the interloan system. From the borrowers' point of view such a plan would result in an approximation of the advantages of a unified library. The burden in such a situation would fall on the central library and other strong libraries, although a system of payments by one library to another, based on actual circulation, might be instituted.

At best, such suggestions as these present many difficulties. When carried beyond a limited objective, they are uncertain in their results and uneven and unfair in placing too much of the burden for their successful operation on the willing librarian and on the libraries with larger incomes.

*The contract system.*<sup>8</sup>—When it is desired to unite political or library units in a more formal manner, the contract method of library extension is always available, particularly when it is impossible or inadvisable to form a separate legal unit. It has already been noted that the contract plan has frequently been employed in the establishment of county libraries.<sup>9</sup> The device may also be used to advantage in establishing connection between a city library and a smaller suburban town. Interesting

<sup>8</sup> Mimeographed copies of different types of contracts may be obtained from the Library Extension Board of the American Library Association.

<sup>9</sup> See p. 271.



examples of this arrangement are found in Davenport and Bettendorf, Iowa; Bay City and Essexville, Michigan; and Toledo and Sylvania, Ohio. Evanston and Oak Park, Illinois, also have contracts with neighboring towns. Similar arrangements (now canceled) existed between Muskegon and Muskegon Heights, Michigan, and Oakland and Piedmont, California. The contract method has also been extensively used in making plans for the joint administration of school libraries and public libraries.

Three more or less distinct bases for the making of contracts for library service may be distinguished. The first and simplest of these requires merely a rough approximation of the probable cost and the payment of a lump sum for the service rendered. Such a contract may not attempt to specify in detail what the contracting library agrees to do, but the parties to the plan may be content with a very general sort of gentlemen's agreement. In the contract between the Detroit Library Commission and Wayne County, for example, the library merely agrees to give service in the county "approximating" that in the city; it is further stipulated that this service shall be "really competent" and "supervised by trained people."<sup>10</sup> Sometimes this flat-rate method may be maintained but somewhat more specific provisions may be agreed upon with regard to hours of opening and the type of book collection and service.<sup>11</sup>

A considerably more definite basis for library contracts is the exact charge for actual service rendered in terms of a fixed rate for each volume circulated to residents of the outlying territory. This plan is followed in Milwaukee and Racine in the service rendered by the city libraries to their respective counties. There is an element of uncertainty in this plan in that the actual circulation cannot be predicted in advance, but when the contract rate is fixed at approximately the library's regular operating cost, this uncertainty is relatively slight and may safely be disregarded. A variation in this method is to charge the unit receiving service an amount based on its population, fixing the an-

<sup>10</sup> MS copy of contract, 1921.

<sup>11</sup> This was the case in Muskegon.

nual charge at the same amount per capita as that of the library providing service.<sup>12</sup> Since the service is presumably equal in both places, this method is entirely fair.

The third method is to distribute the cost of the service in various ways, each of the contracting parties making itself responsible for certain definite items in the budget. This plan is followed, for example, in some of the contracts between the Cleveland Public Library and Cuyahoga County towns. It is the usual method in agreements made between public libraries and boards of education with reference to joint administration of school libraries.

The contract system has demonstrated its usefulness in actual practice in many places and is distinctly a workable solution of the regional problem, at least up to a certain point. It has certain definite advantages and also certain quite positive disadvantages, which may be briefly stated at this point.

The principal advantages of the contract method are three: First, it permits unification of service when legal consolidation is not possible or advisable. Second, it allows for piecemeal expansion by which one unit at a time may be added to the central library, and it also permits experimentation when conditions are too uncertain for the use of any other method. Finally, contracts are easily terminated when either party desires a change.

On the negative side it is easy to see that contracts for library service are subject to the difficulties found in all forms of contractual relationships. If the contract is couched in broad general terms, it is difficult to interpret specifically; if its provisions are minutely detailed, the document may become unduly complicated. One or the other of the parties, especially the small unit receiving service, is quite likely to feel that it is not getting its money's worth. There is also the inherent difficulty in finding any wholly satisfactory method of distributing the costs. Further, there are very real difficulties connected with the termination of contracts, which may seriously embarrass the contracting library which has perhaps built up equipment and book

<sup>12</sup> Contract between Oakland and Piedmont, Calif.

stocks and provided quarters for the service.<sup>13</sup> All of these matters emphasize the possibility of friction in the relationship of the contracting parties.

Much more fundamental is the general objection that the contract method merely attaches and even actually subordinates the outlying district to the central library which provides the service. Legally the library is still a function of the central city, managed and controlled by a board which is part of the government of that city. Ordinarily the attached unit can have no official representation on the library board. The resulting library in its control is not the library of the larger unit, but is still the city library with certain functions added to it. In short, the contract plan to a large extent necessarily disregards the element of pride in becoming part of a regional project, in which all the units, large and small, are associated on equal terms. The contract relationship is paternal rather than fraternal. This reasoning is perhaps least sound in cases where one large city or county is actually dominant in a proposed region; it is likely to be most effective in the union of several counties or other units of more or less equal size and wealth.

#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES IN THE CONSIDERATION OF THE REGIONAL PROBLEM

Most of the plans outlined above have produced important results. They are practical, easily understood, and based on actual experience. But in spite of their very obvious advantages, it still seems worth while to carry our analysis of the possibilities of regional libraries somewhat farther in a search for a more complete solution of the problem. At this point, then, we leave the solid ground of experience and begin to concern ourselves with matters about which there is little or no precedent.

The first approach to this problem may be made by the formulation of a number of general principles bearing on the question of regional library development. Several of these are mat-

<sup>13</sup> Failure of the wealthy small city of Piedmont to renew its contract with Oakland seems a case in point. Other examples might be cited.

ters of basic importance; the others relate to questions of detail and method.

*A new definition of the public library.*—It is probable that the first step in the solution of the problem of library regionalism lies in the direction of finding a satisfactory answer to the simple question: What is an adequate public library? The exact nature of satisfactory library service must be recognized and defined. When this has been done, there will at least be some basis for further progress.

In the days of the early school-district libraries in New York and Michigan, a "library" consisted of a case of books in the home of a school trustee. Harper and Brothers made a fortune selling to the school districts "libraries" of fifty volumes each.<sup>14</sup> This limited conception of a library was long ago outgrown, but in spite of a century's progress in building up our notions of library service, we are still willing to regard any separately administered unit as a library. Ordinarily no limitations as to number of volumes, size or qualifications of staff, or hours of opening, are made. No matter how small, how struggling, how manifestly ineffective, it is still a "library."

The most definite pronouncement on this question of what constitutes "good modern library service" was made more or less officially by the Wisconsin Free Library Commission in 1925. At that time it was declared that a minimum for such service could be met only by a library with an annual income of \$4,000 in a town of not less than 4,000 people. For communities of smaller size "pooling of resources and the unification of organization" was declared to be the only proper course of action.<sup>15</sup> A conclusion of this sort, sponsored by a library commission noted for its successful development of small public libraries, is highly significant. Judged even by this relatively low standard, 55 per cent of the public libraries of Illinois are below

<sup>14</sup> *Harper's Illustrated Catalogue of Valuable Standard Works in the Several Departments of General Literature* (New York, 1847), pp. 144-47.

<sup>15</sup> E. M. Fair, "A Unit for Library Service," *Wisconsin Library Bulletin*, XXI (1925), 172-74.



the population required, and 70 per cent are below the income considered necessary.<sup>16</sup> Less than 30 per cent of the libraries of Massachusetts meet the same financial standard.<sup>17</sup> It is probably not an exaggeration to say that two-thirds of all the public libraries in the United States have incomes of less than \$4,000 annually.

Let us hasten to add that no one, certainly not the Wisconsin Free Library Commission, believes that these libraries should be abolished; rather it is suggested that they become component parts of larger groups. There is a sentimental attachment to the "tiny library," just as there is to the little red schoolhouse, but state authorities must be courageous enough to sponsor a program of wider scope in which these small independent units will become outposts in a unified system.

The question thus resolves itself into the consideration of what is actually the efficient library unit. A categorical answer, expressed as an exact formula showing what this unit should be in terms of people, money, use, volumes, area, or what not, might be attempted, but much of the information needed as a basis for a judgment of this sort is lacking. Moreover, so many variables would perhaps be found that the general application of the formula would be impossible and unprofitable. As a matter of fact, when the situation is analyzed, it becomes clear that the functions and services of a library are made up of several distinct subdivisions, and that the question of size and efficiency of the library as a whole must be measured in terms of these component parts. Without attempting to introduce too much complexity, it may be said that the elements which make up complete library service are: (1) the central administrative authority, (2) a technical unit for the acquisition and preparation of library materials, (3) central reference service, (4) central circulation and readers' advisory service, and (5) local service throughout the area.

<sup>16</sup> Illinois State Library, Library Extension Division, *Statistics of the Libraries of Illinois*, 1932.

<sup>17</sup> Massachusetts, Board of Free Library Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1932.



It is difficult to place any upper limit on the size of the legal and administrative unit for library service. Examples of many extremely large library units, both in cities and in counties, readily suggest themselves; and no serious objection to these library systems as units of control is ordinarily made. Our study of library boards has shown that the difficulties of the board system are more apparent in small towns than in larger cities. There would be much administrative simplification if the board could function for a unit of considerable size and if many of the boards of small libraries were abolished. The library board charged with responsibility for the general success of a large unit would be less likely to concern itself with matters of trivial importance, and the proper relationship between the board and the librarian would be more closely observed. General supervision and planning would be in the hands of a competent administrator, chosen particularly for his qualifications for such a task. In the administration of its business affairs, also, the larger unit should be more efficient. The whole system of accounting and payment of bills would be centralized, with almost certain savings in time and cost. Numerous independent sets of records would be eliminated, and an adequate and accurate system of accounting would be possible.

Likewise, general efficiency in the technical processes of the library should increase with size up to a reasonable point. Purchasing, cataloging, classification, and binding would be handled as a unit by competent specialists. This should result in economy of time, in great improvement in technical form and method, and in uniformity. Such centralization would undoubtedly do much to clear up one of the most serious defects in the administration of many small libraries. It should also result in some savings in book purchasing through better methods and through the increased purchasing power of the larger unit.

There remain for consideration those activities of the library which are concerned with service to readers. It is in connection with these elements that really marked differences between the independent small library and the larger library unit begin to appear.

A library cannot support an adequate claim to efficiency until it has a strong, well-selected, and up-to-date reference collection, consisting of books, documents, an adequate list of current periodicals, with bound files of important sets, periodical indexes, maps, pamphlets, and also competent reference librarians to direct the use of these materials. In large part this is entirely beyond the capacities of the small independent library; it can only offer its users a limited amount of reference service. When its resources are insufficient, it may direct a client to the library of a neighboring city, of whose resources and generosity he must frankly take advantage, since he pays nothing toward the maintenance of the library. To attempt this sort of thing regularly on a comprehensive scale is scarcely fair to the larger library. If the small library were a part of the same system, it could, with entire propriety and as a matter of routine, send its high-school students, its debaters, its women's club members, its business and technical men, and all others seeking special information to the central reference department for assistance. A correlated system of service would replace irregular and more or less haphazard relationships.

Similarly, a library is not a really efficient unit until it has available a strong and well-selected central reservoir of circulating books, really representative of the literature of many subjects, on which readers may draw at will. Again, all this is beyond the resources of the small independent library. For service of this type it must resort to whatever interloan system is available. However efficient this may be, it cannot supply the reader with a representative collection of books which he may inspect personally and from which he may select as he chooses.

The small library, no matter how carefully its reference and circulating books are selected, remains a small library. Its collection is not fluid. Unused material on its shelves cannot be shifted to a central reservoir and replaced with other materials from the same source. Its reference work is, at best, elementary. If it chooses to become part of a large system it immediately adds to its resources and to the material available to its readers the whole strength of the central collection. True, that collec-

tion is not on the spot, but much of it can be sent to the smaller center at very short notice, much of it is available by telephone, and all of it is accessible within perhaps an hour's journey, which may often be combined with trips made for other purposes. Above all, the whole organization functions as an integrated unit, the relations of the parts are planned, and both library and readers are legally entitled to use the resources of the whole system.

The ordinary library "standards" with respect to the book collection are likely to prove entirely misleading in this respect. The number of books per capita in the small library may be entirely satisfactory, even laudably high; yet this does not mean that any considerable number of titles on a particular subject are available to the potential reader. Innumerable important books which he might wish to read or to consult are not in his local library and are ordinarily obtainable only from a central state source.<sup>18</sup>

But local service on the spot must not be forgotten. The foregoing attempt to state the advantages of the central reference and circulation collections does not mean that local service can be eliminated. It must be maintained at approximately the present levels. If it is reduced in any important particular, the whole plan falls to pieces. While certain technical processes are centralized, the ability of the small unit to serve its own readers as far as practicable should not be impaired. The large library system, however, makes available to such readers many resources and services to which they do not now have access.

The foregoing discussion may be briefly summarized by attempting the formulation of a modern definition of a library. Set down in categorical form, the essential elements in efficient library service as we understand it today include the following:

Active and efficient administrative direction

Centralized financial administration and accounting

Centralized book purchasing under competent technical direction

<sup>18</sup> The results of the survey of libraries in the Chicago metropolitan area, made by the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago for the Chicago Library Club, are highly interesting and significant in this respect.

- Centralized (or centrally directed) cataloging and classification by trained personnel
- A central reference collection of broad scope, including printed materials of all types
- A central reservoir of circulating books large enough and live enough to meet a wide demand from many types of readers
- A staff of specialists sufficient to provide a high quality of general and technical reference service, readers' advisory service, service to adult groups, and service to children and schools
- A system of community and school branches, and other extension agencies
- Additional service to outlying communities through stations and book wagons

The translation of such a list of potential services into dollars and cents would vary greatly in detail from place to place. Analysis of possible budgets makes it seem unlikely that these requirements are obtainable in a library system with an annual income of less than \$25,000. At this point the library might begin to meet the suggested conditions. It might include on its staff some of the specialists mentioned and might provide for the services of others through judicious combinations of duties. It could add (in normal times) approximately three thousand volumes annually to its collection and could maintain a modest periodical list and a limited number of bound periodical sets.

Any city or town large enough and wealthy enough to provide library service of the sort here suggested is entitled to independent administration if it so desires, although the very strength of its collection may make it a center for smaller libraries. The advantages of consolidation for libraries of this size are less obvious, but there is little doubt that it would still be desirable in many places. For any smaller library the wisest course would be to yield its legal rights to independent administration and to join forces with a larger unit of service.

*A natural area for library service.*—Of equal importance with the determination of the elements required in efficient library service is the selection of the geographical area to be served by the regional library. Basing our conclusions on the consideration of the typical geographical situations affecting library extension in chapter ix, we may suggest that the most satisfactory regional unit for library service, certainly in most states, is the



"consumers' trading area," as defined and mapped by the United States Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce and by various commercial agencies.<sup>19</sup> These areas represent in the main a consensus of the opinions of many business and trade leaders as to the extent of a city's sphere of influence as a trade center. They should not be thought of as absolutely and inflexibly defined. Their spheres of influence overlap and shade gradually into each other, and their boundaries are constantly changing.

In the United States as a whole there are 641 principal trading areas and about 3,000 areas of secondary importance. Some of the principal areas are very large, embracing many counties; others include no more than a single county. Reduced to geometrical form, their average area of 4,500 square miles may be visualized as a circle with a radius of 38 miles. Michigan, for example, has 25 principal trading areas, with an average size of about 2,300 square miles.<sup>20</sup> In only a small minority of cases would a resident of any region in this state be more than an hour's drive from the central city of the trading area.

The use of the trading area as a library unit may be defended on several grounds. Although rather large in size, the figures in the foregoing paragraph show that distances to the central city are not as a rule excessive when measured in time. The principal city of the area is the center of business activity of all kinds; it is also the transportation center for the region, convenient for those who may wish to use the central library in person and equally convenient for the distribution of library materials to outlying points. The area as a whole possesses a high degree of

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce (Department of Commerce), *Market Data Handbook of the United States*, "Domestic Commerce Series" (1929), No. 30. See maps in folder. Regional surveys by same office: *Commercial Survey of the Pacific Northwest* (1932), No. 51; *Commercial Structure of New England* (1929), No. 26; *Market Data Handbook of New England* (1929), No. 24; *Commercial Survey of the Southeast* (1927), No. 19; *Commercial Survey of the Pacific Southwest* (1930), No. 37. See also International Magazine Company, Inc., *The Trading Area System of Sales Control: A Marketing Atlas of the United States* (New York, 1931).

<sup>20</sup> It should be recalled that the size of the average California county is about 2,700 square miles.



social and economic unity, and the central city is the natural focus for the people of the region and as such is an ideal location for the central library. In short, the trade area appears to be the most natural and useful human grouping of people in a unit of reasonable size which has as yet been determined.

It is not contended that the trade area would infallibly be the best area for the regional library. However, its advantages are so obvious and so numerous that it should always receive serious consideration in the determination of the library unit. In case the principal trade area seems too large to meet a particular situation, the smaller trading areas selected on the same basis would seem to merit second choice.

When to the economic interest concentrated in a particular trade area there can be added a positive geographic and community interest, which may form the basis for regional patriotism, then the situation is unusually fortunate. The possibility of capitalizing this regional patriotism for the library, and of making it the motive for the building-up of a book collection particularly suited to the region and its people, is another argument for the regional library.

Space does not permit a catalog of the regions which might be considered as possibilities in this connection. The determination of such areas is not a task for a single person, but must be left to interested social planners, well equipped with special knowledge regarding the regions of each state. Some of the maps in the previous chapter, such as those of St. Louis, Gary, Peoria, and Detroit, are fair examples of distinctive regions. Merely as suggestions the following possibilities may be listed: In the South, the Texas Panhandle, the Bayou Teche country in Louisiana, the important area tributary to Charleston, South Carolina, and the East Tennessee region centering in Knoxville; in the Middle West, the Grand Traverse Bay and the Calumet areas in Michigan, the southwestern Indiana region centering in Evansville, and the Gary-Hammond-East Chicago steel region in the northwestern part of the same state; in the East, the Berkshire, Connecticut Valley, and Cape Cod regions in Massa-

chusetts, the North Jersey metropolitan region, the great Pittsburgh steel region; and in the Far West, the Salt Lake Valley,<sup>21</sup> the Inland Empire around Spokane, and the Redwood area in California. The more the possibilities of such regions as library units are studied, the more fascinating the subject becomes.

The grand strategy for the development of a system of public libraries for a state or for the nation as a whole must be based on careful study of the important facts relative to the whole question of library, governmental, and trade units. Some of these facts, which are required, along with many others, are assembled in Table XIV. From the viewpoint of library regionalism it is particularly significant to note that less than 8 per cent of all American counties now have county library service and that one-fourth of all the counties are under 10,000 in population. In connection with what has been said in the preceding section regarding a more developed concept of library service, the impossibility of the extension of libraries strictly as a county matter is clear. Even more striking is the fact that the number of individual public libraries in the country is almost twice as great as the number of municipal units with a population of over 2,500. The conclusion that some sort of regional grouping is absolutely necessary is inescapable.

As a concrete suggestion which may give point to this general discussion of library regionalism, there is included in the table an estimate of the minimum and maximum number of public library units required for adequate service in each state. No claim for finality can possibly be made for these figures. They are presented solely for the purpose of offering a reasonable general view of the possible future trends of library organization throughout the country.<sup>22</sup>

*The library not necessarily a fixed territorial unit.*—Logically, this matter of the library unit may be pressed one step farther. Just as the trade area is not a fixed geographical unit, so the li-

<sup>21</sup> "Utah's 212 Taxing Units," *Utah Taxpayer*, XI (November, 1933), 2.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. American Library Association, *Notes for a National Plan for Libraries*, June 15, 1934, pp. 4-5.

TABLE XIV  
COUNTY, MUNICIPAL, LIBRARY, AND TRADE-AREA UNITS IN THE UNITED STATES\*

| STATE                      | STATES     |                | COUNTIES |            |              | URBAN PLACES |            |                              | TRADE AREAS |           | LIBRARIES |       | LIBRARY UNITS REQUIRED |       |
|----------------------------|------------|----------------|----------|------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-------|------------------------|-------|
|                            | Population | Area (Sq. Mi.) | Total    | Aver. Area | Under 10,000 | Over 30,000  | Over 2,500 | Over 5,000 without libraries | Principal   | Secondary | County    | Total | Min.                   | Max.  |
|                            |            |                |          |            |              |              |            |                              |             |           |           |       |                        |       |
| New England states....     | 8,166,341  | 61,976         | 67       | 925.0      | 4            | 45           | 232        | 0                            | 52          | 256       | 0         | 1,371 | 50                     | 202   |
| Connecticut.....           | 1,666,903  | 4,820          | 8        | 602.5      | 0            | 8            | 33         | 0                            | 11          | 36        | 0         | 198   | 11                     | 38    |
| Maine.....                 | 797,423    | 29,805         | 16       | 1868.4     | 0            | 2            | 26         | 0                            | 7           | 37        | 0         | 223   | 7                      | 37    |
| Massachusetts.....         | 4,249,614  | 8,019          | 14       | 574.2      | 2            | 29           | 122        | 0                            | 14          | 133       | 0         | 410   | 14                     | 100   |
| New Hampshire.....         | 465,293    | 9,031          | 10       | 903.1      | 0            | 2            | 18         | 0                            | 10          | 19        | 0         | 254   | 19                     | 19    |
| Rhode Island.....          | 687,497    | 1,067          | 5        | 213.4      | 0            | 4            | 19         | 0                            | 3           | 22        | 0         | 61    | 1                      | 1     |
| Vermont.....               | 359,611    | 9,124          | 14       | 651.7      | 2            | 0            | 14         | 0                            | 7           | 7         | 0         | 218   | 7                      | 7     |
| Middle Atlantic states.... | 30,346,730 | 135,990        | 232      | 586.5      | 13           | 72           | 785        | 94                           | 99          | 799       | 25        | 1,250 | 80                     | 535   |
| Delaware.....              | 238,380    | 1,965          | 3        | 655.0      | 0            | 1            | 5          | 0                            | 1           | 9         | 1         | 13    | 1                      | 1     |
| District of Columbia.....  | 486,869    | 62             | .....    | .....      | .....        | .....        | .....      | .....                        | .....       | .....     | .....     | ..... | .....                  | ..... |
| Maryland.....              | 1,631,326  | 9,941          | 24       | 414.2      | 1            | 3            | 21         | 1                            | 6           | 23        | .....     | 51    | 3                      | 10    |
| New Jersey.....            | 4,088,334  | 7,514          | 21       | 357.8      | 0            | 22           | 169        | 2                            | 4           | 189       | 11        | 337   | 10                     | 100   |
| New York.....              | 12,588,666 | 47,654         | 62       | 768.6      | 1            | 22           | 106        | 4                            | 30          | 194       | 3         | 555   | 30                     | 200   |
| Pennsylvania.....          | 9,031,350  | 44,832         | 67       | 669.1      | 5            | 20           | 354        | 78                           | 44          | 318       | 5         | 275   | 25                     | 200   |
| West Virginia.....         | 1,729,265  | 24,022         | 55       | 436.7      | 6            | 3            | 39         | 9                            | 13          | 43        | 2         | 18    | 10                     | 13    |
| North Central states....   | 38,594,100 | 756,368        | 1,057    | 715.5      | 220          | 102          | 1,009      | 32                           | 209         | 919       | 53        | 2,356 | 171                    | 605   |
| Illinois.....              | 7,650,654  | 56,043         | 102      | 549.4      | 9            | 20           | 102        | 11                           | 21          | 170       | 1         | 274   | 20                     | 80    |
| Indiana.....               | 3,438,563  | 36,015         | 92       | 391.8      | 7            | 13           | 95         | 0                            | 22          | 97        | 15        | 222   | 10                     | 70    |
| Iowa.....                  | 2,460,959  | 55,536         | 99       | 561.5      | 0            | 7            | 81         | 0                            | 19          | 80        | 1         | 258   | 15                     | 50    |
| Kansas.....                | 1,866,999  | 81,774         | 105      | 778.8      | 38           | 3            | 62         | 0                            | 18          | 49        | 3         | 215   | 15                     | 40    |
| Michigan.....              | 4,842,325  | 57,760         | 83       | 692.5      | 23           | 15           | 114        | 5                            | 25          | 91        | 5         | 246   | 20                     | 60    |
| Minnesota.....             | 2,563,953  | 87,188         | 87       | 929.4      | 14           | 3            | 73         | 1                            | 11          | 66        | 6         | 182   | 10                     | 50    |
| Missouri.....              | 3,629,367  | 68,727         | 115      | 597.6      | 15           | 5            | 72         | 8                            | 14          | 68        | 0         | 108   | 14                     | 50    |
| Nebraska.....              | 1,377,903  | 76,868         | 93       | 825.9      | 40           | 2            | 35         | 0                            | 12          | 35        | 0         | 266   | 12                     | 50    |
| North Dakota.....          | 686,845    | 70,183         | 53       | 1324.2     | 25           | 0            | 12         | 1                            | 10          | 10        | 0         | 31    | 10                     | 10    |

\* Data on county libraries and on cities and towns of over 5,000 population without libraries from American Library Association; on number of libraries, from latest available state library extension agency reports; and from American Library Association; on trade areas, from International Magazine Co., *op. cit.* Other statistics from 1930 census; areas used are land areas. Since 1930 there has been a slight decrease in the number of counties. County libraries tabulated are those with annual incomes of over \$1,000. Grand totals of columns under "Urban Places" adjusted because a few cities are located in two different states.

TABLE XIV—Continued

| STATE                                     | STATES      |                | COUNTIES |            |              | URBAN PLACES |            |                               | TRADE AREAS |            | LIBRARIES |       | LIBRARY UNITS REQUIRED |       |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------|----------------|----------|------------|--------------|--------------|------------|-------------------------------|-------------|------------|-----------|-------|------------------------|-------|
|                                           | Population  | Area (Sq. Mi.) | Total    | Aver. Area | Under 10,000 | Over 30,000  | Over 2,500 | Over 5,000 without Li-braries | Prin-cipal  | Sec-ondary | County    | Total | Min.                   | Max.  |
|                                           |             |                |          |            |              |              |            |                               |             |            |           |       |                        |       |
| North Central states—<br><i>Continued</i> |             |                |          |            |              |              |            |                               |             |            |           |       |                        |       |
| Ohio.....                                 | 6,646,697   | 40,740         | 88       | 462.9      | 0            | 23           | 174        | 6                             | 29          | 168        | 9         | 216   | 20                     | 80    |
| South Dakota.....                         | 692,849     | 76,868         | 69       | 1114.0     | 42           | 1            | 16         | 0                             | 10          | 14         | 3         | 74    | 10                     | 15    |
| Wisconsin.....                            | 2,939,006   | 55,256         | 71       | 778.2      | 7            | 10           | 83         | 0                             | 18          | 71         | 10        | 264   | 15                     | 50    |
| Southern states.....                      | 33,771,653  | 842,338        | 1,308    | 644.0      | 291          | 60           | 792        | 106                           | 193         | 726        | 55        | 565   | 129                    | 405   |
| Alabama.....                              | 2,646,248   | 51,279         | 67       | 765.3      | 0            | 3            | 53         | 9                             | 13          | 48         | 4         | 18    | 10                     | 30    |
| Arkansas.....                             | 1,854,482   | 52,525         | 75       | 700.3      | 6            | 2            | 49         | 8                             | 14          | 44         | 1         | 19    | 5                      | 20    |
| Florida.....                              | 1,468,211   | 54,861         | 67       | 818.8      | 29           | 5            | 58         | 10                            | 12          | 47         | 0         | 44    | 10                     | 30    |
| Georgia.....                              | 2,908,506   | 58,725         | 101      | 364.8      | 61           | 5            | 64         | 6                             | 20          | 64         | 1         | 53    | 8                      | 30    |
| Kentucky.....                             | 2,614,889   | 40,181         | 120      | 334.8      | 29           | 4            | 53         | 7                             | 14          | 30         | 4         | 64    | 10                     | 30    |
| Louisiana.....                            | 2,101,593   | 45,409         | 64       | 709.5      | 6            | 3            | 48         | 10                            | 6           | 51         | 6         | 16    | 6                      | 30    |
| Mississippi.....                          | 2,009,821   | 46,362         | 82       | 565.4      | 5            | 2            | 39         | 3                             | 13          | 37         | 4         | 22    | 8                      | 30    |
| North Carolina.....                       | 3,170,276   | 48,740         | 100      | 487.4      | 10           | 8            | 68         | 5                             | 19          | 61         | 11        | 64    | 10                     | 50    |
| Oklahoma.....                             | 2,396,040   | 69,414         | 77       | 901.5      | 3            | 3            | 68         | 1                             | 17          | 63         | 1         | 74    | 10                     | 30    |
| South Carolina.....                       | 1,738,765   | 30,495         | 46       | 662.9      | 1            | 2            | 40         | 4                             | 11          | 38         | 5         | 53    | 10                     | 40    |
| Tennessee.....                            | 2,616,556   | 41,687         | 95       | 438.8      | 15           | 4            | 48         | 6                             | 11          | 54         | 4         | 34    | 4                      | 20    |
| Texas.....                                | 5,824,715   | 262,398        | 254      | 1033.0     | 95           | 13           | 159        | 34                            | 31          | 163        | 13        | 58    | 30                     | 50    |
| Virginia.....                             | 2,421,851   | 40,262         | 100      | 402.6      | 31           | 6            | 45         | 3                             | 12          | 26         | 1         | 46    | 8                      | 25    |
| Mountain and Pacific states.....          | 11,896,222  | 1,177,104      | 410      | 2870.9     | 217          | 31           | 351        | 2                             | 88          | 298        | 97        | 754   | 85                     | 195   |
| Arizona.....                              | 435,573     | 113,810        | 14       | 8129.3     | 3            | 2            | 14         | 1                             | 6           | 14         | 1         | 19    | 6                      | 10    |
| California.....                           | 5,677,251   | 155,652        | 58       | 2683.6     | 14           | 17           | 155        | 0                             | 15          | 144        | 46        | 263   | 15                     | 40    |
| Colorado.....                             | 1,035,791   | 103,658        | 63       | 1645.4     | 41           | 3            | 27         | 0                             | 9           | 22         | 0         | 90    | 9                      | 20    |
| Idaho.....                                | 445,032     | 83,354         | 44       | 1894.4     | 31           | 0            | 21         | 0                             | 7           | 14         | 0         | 31    | 7                      | 15    |
| Montana.....                              | 537,606     | 146,131        | 56       | 2609.5     | 40           | 1            | 18         | 0                             | 10          | 11         | 10        | 42    | 10                     | 15    |
| Nevada.....                               | 91,058      | 109,821        | 17       | 6460.0     | 15           | 0            | 5          | 0                             | 4           | 5          | 0         | 13    | 4                      | 5     |
| New Mexico.....                           | 423,317     | 122,593        | 31       | 3951.7     | 12           | 0            | 16         | 1                             | 7           | 4          | 2         | 36    | 5                      | 10    |
| Oregon.....                               | 953,786     | 95,607         | 36       | 2655.7     | 13           | 1            | 28         | 0                             | 11          | 25         | 9         | 110   | 10                     | 25    |
| Utah.....                                 | 507,847     | 29             | 233      | 211.0      | 20           | 2            | 21         | 0                             | 4           | 24         | 8         | 41    | 4                      | 15    |
| Washington.....                           | 1,563,396   | 66,836         | 39       | 1713.7     | 15           | 5            | 38         | 0                             | 10          | 27         | 2         | 88    | 10                     | 25    |
| Wyoming.....                              | 225,565     | 97,548         | 23       | 4241.2     | 13           | 0            | 8          | 0                             | 5           | 8          | 19        | 21    | 5                      | 15    |
| Grand total.....                          | 122,775,046 | 2,973,776      | 3,074    | 967.4      | 745          | 310          | 3,165      | 233                           | 641         | 2,998      | 230       | 6,296 | 515                    | 1,932 |

brary area should not be regarded as bounded by hard-and-fast limits. No good library should be forced to live unto itself alone. It is as foolish (and almost as difficult) to restrict the use of the Boston Public Library as it is to restrict the use of Boston Common. Use of the Detroit Public Library should be as unrestricted geographically as that of the Art Museum which faces it across Woodward Avenue. Again, the true nature of a library must be recognized. Any important collection of books naturally draws people to it in the same manner as an art gallery, a museum, a public park, or even a hospital. The only difference is that people normally expect to be allowed to borrow some of the library's books under established regulations. The advantages of the services the library may render do not cease at a particular spot on the ground.

If this point is well taken, it means that people should be allowed to use the library agency which is most convenient for their purposes. Convenience to the user, not his legal residence in a particular city or town, is the logical and reasonable basis for a decision on this point. No city library now restricts its readers to the use of the branch in whose district they reside. The borrower selects his own agency or agencies, and the registration files of a given branch are constantly shifting. What is here suggested is merely the application of the same idea to the use of regional libraries.

Present methods of determining library rules and regulations with respect to residence requirements for readers cause many difficulties in this connection. Innumerable instances of the complicated and often unfortunate results and of the essential unreason of the present system might be cited. For example, a woman residing in Berwyn, a Chicago suburb, whose husband is employed in Chicago, desires for apparently logical reasons to use the public library in Cicero. In a certain Washington suburb, most of whose heads of families are employed in Washington and hence entitled to use its public library, about the only adult persons left in the suburb who are not permitted to use the public library of the District are the ministers of the town,



the very people who are most eager to have this privilege. Present conditions unfortunately make such situations as these inevitable.

*The state and the local unit must be jointly concerned.*—How is the library to be lifted to a higher plane as a governmental function, in which the state and the local units are jointly interested, without being subjected to the dangers of management by a central bureaucracy and without losing the manifest advantages of local interest and support? The material assistance of the state and the strength which comes from larger units must be utilized in the development of adequate library service, but it must not be forgotten that the strength of the library movement today rests on the local support it has received. Some compromise, some synthesis, of state and local interests must be effected.

The object to be achieved is to make public library service a systematic and united whole rather than a mere scramble for local advantage or superiority. The more successful the individual library becomes in maintaining a preferred position, the more difficult, or even impossible, it is for a real system of public libraries to develop. The small unit must be dignified to the extent of being made part of a system, of which the whole is greater and stronger than the component parts. Obviously, this will require important mutual concessions by the state and local governments.

The translation of this general objective into concrete form is the most important governmental problem facing American public libraries today. It is on this specific point that the attention of all who are interested in the further development of libraries should be concentrated. While the detailed program adopted by any state must be varied to fit the patterns of government and library organization it has already developed, there are certain elements in the plan which seem sufficiently broad to be of general application. Progress in the fusion of state and local interests in the library must be made in four directions: (1) in the legal definition of the state's concern in library development, (2) in the retention of local autonomy in administration, (3) in

the insistence by the state on general standards for library efficiency, and (4) in the correlation of state and local support in such a manner as to insure at least a minimum of library service throughout the whole state.

The first point in the foregoing program, the legal declaration of the state's interest in libraries, marks a decided advance in the position heretofore taken by most states with respect to public libraries. In some states it is almost certain that constitutional provisions will be necessary to insure the general and complete application of a state-wide library program such as that suggested above. The main purpose of any constitutional provision of the sort should be to establish beyond question the right of the state to provide for the founding of a uniform system of libraries through appropriate legislation. The same point should also be covered in the library laws of the state. The sections of the law relating to this subject need not be greatly detailed, but should include a number of specific points, among which the following are important. First, the law should declare that it is the policy and the purpose of the state to establish a system of libraries as rapidly as its resources and those of local government permit. Whether it is possible to go beyond this point and make the maintenance of libraries mandatory is a question for each state to decide for itself. In the second place, the law should provide that library service is a part of the state's educational program, although not necessarily a part of the school system. And, finally, it would probably be desirable to make the provisions of the library law applicable to all local units, including home-rule cities. If desired, some exceptions could be made to the general rule in the case of the form of library government in cities of a certain size, but any provisions regarding library standards and minimum support should be made of general application.

With respect to the actual administration of the public libraries, the state should be prepared to be generous. There is always the danger that the proposal of state direction of the library system, and particularly the suggestion of state aid to libra-

ries, will raise the specter of bureaucratic control by a central state agency. This is by no means an essential part of the scheme; as a matter of fact, it seems rather unlikely that any state would attempt to exercise such control over its subordinate political units. In view of the whole history of public library development in the United States, the state should be willing to give local units administrative control over libraries within the structural framework determined by law.

As an essential part of the general library program, the state must insist on the protection of the quality of service which is given by whatever regional or other units are established. This means the working-out of a system of service standards which must be maintained by every library. This is a matter for state supervision, but every local library should be willing to conform to such standards. Perhaps even more important is the necessity for the protection of the personnel of libraries by the certification, not only of chief librarians, but also of the professional library staff in general. Establishment of such a system, in states which do not have it, might not be too high a price to pay for the absorption of local units in a comprehensive plan for regional library service. As a protection against political encroachment, and as a basis for efficient service, certification seems almost essential.

*Support should be based on population and need.*—The fourth point in the joint program of the state and local government is of sufficient importance to merit special attention as a major plank in any platform of regional library development. The most effective way in which the state can play a part in this movement is by assistance in the financing of library service on a large scale. It would be a mistake to consider such aid an outright gift to local government. Rather it is all part of an inevitable readjustment of the whole tax system and a new method of distribution of public income between state and city which is now impending. If the sharing of state-collected and administered taxes is "the hope of the city"<sup>23</sup> in the conduct of its gov-

<sup>23</sup> S. E. Leland, "The Financial Hope of the City," *Municipal Year Book*, 1934, pp. 8-18.

ernment as a whole, this is all the more true of a single marginal function such as public library service. Moreover, if the city library is to extend the field of its influence beyond its own boundaries, it is only just and fair that the state should assume part of the burden.

In any far-reaching scheme for regional library service, the state and the region should combine in the appropriation of necessary funds. State contributions are perhaps not absolutely essential in every state to the maintenance of library service of an elementary sort, but are almost certain to be required if service is to be anywhere nearly equal throughout the whole state. All parts of the region should contribute toward the system as a whole, unless specifically withdrawn from participation in the project. There is always the possibility that state aid might be granted only to regional libraries as a special inducement (in plain English, a club) to encourage the development of a regional system rather than the continuance of independent city or town libraries, but the final results of such a method might prove unfortunate in some states.

The salient possibility which lies behind state aid to libraries is the adoption of the principle of a certain degree of equalization of library service. This, in turn, means the acceptance of a new basis for the support of libraries: The amount and kind of library service required for a local unit, large or small, should be determined by its need and its population rather than by its wealth. Until "need" is defined in some more accurate manner, the most reasonable basis for the support of a public library unit is probably the number of people to be served. This means that the amounts allocated to libraries should be in the form of appropriations per capita, rather than millage rates on property valuations, which mean greatly varying per capita amounts.

It follows that the state's contribution to local libraries should be based primarily on the number of people in the region to be served and should probably be expressed as a certain amount per capita. A formula for varying the per capita rate, favoring regions with low property valuations, might be applied for the benefit of the less fortunate areas, although in some states re-



gional variations might not be so great as to render this expedient necessary.

A subordinate, but perplexing, question arises in connection with state aid. Shall the amount contributed by the state be earmarked for specific items in the regional library budget, or shall it be used in any way the local unit determines? In general, earmarking for particular purposes increases budgetary difficulties, but this method may be necessary in order to show concretely what the state is doing for the benefit of the regional system. A reasonable general rule to follow in case an exact allocation of state funds is required would be to make the state's contribution sufficient to cover the cost of central administration and the general overhead of the system as a whole, leaving the cost of local service to be borne by the local unit. Included in the state's portion might be the salaries of the chief librarian and his office, the central catalog and order staff, the supervisors of regional service, and perhaps a portion of the expenditures for the maintenance of the central reference and circulating collections.

In the main, under such a distribution of funds the amount contributed by the local units would go for the support of service within their own areas. Provision should also be made permitting cities, villages, or other subdivisions to raise sums additional to the minimum rate applying to the whole region, for use within their own territory. These amounts would be expended for staff, books, and equipment of local branches, under the direction of the general library administration. Some such provision as this would probably be necessary to induce the wealthier communities to join the regional system. It would, to a large extent, relieve their fears that the regional plan would result in leveling down the quality of library service in their respective districts.

*Local representation and interest in management must be maintained.*—Perhaps the most serious danger in the adoption of a comprehensive system of regional libraries lies in the possible loss of local direction of the subordinate units. This would be



especially likely to occur in case existing well-established libraries were made a part of a larger group. Neither the state's interest in library development nor the creation of administrative boards for regional libraries should be allowed to paralyze or displace local interest in the management of the system.

Ways and means must therefore be found for providing more or less formal local representation in the administration of the regional library. If the number of governmental units to be combined is not too great—a small group of counties, for instance—the desired representation may easily be given by allowing each county in the region to appoint one member of the library's board of management. Or in cases involving a larger number of units—in a metropolitan region, for example—several units might jointly choose a board member. Representation of as many districts as possible, without unduly increasing the size of the governing board, is important.

Whether formal representation of this sort is a feature of the regional plan or not, the creation of library councils or advisory committees in important localities throughout the region would probably be expedient. The necessity for their appointment would vary greatly from region to region. Preferably these local bodies should have no specific powers of management, but they might well be given official status, and regular channels for the submission of their reports should be prescribed. At all times they should be kept fully informed as to the activities of the whole system. Their greatest contributions would be in assuring the fair consideration by the central regional board of the library needs of their respective communities and in acting as liaison agencies between the people of the local communities and the library administration. Wisely used, their services and advice might be made most important.

*Regional projects more easily undertaken in new territory.*—The easiest general pronouncement to make concerning the establishment of regional libraries is that experimentation in the development of public libraries serving large areas is more easily undertaken in regions where there is little or no library service

than in those which are already more or less completely served. The *de novo* method is subject to fewer difficulties than the combination method. In the latter, existing institutions have been firmly established, and traditions of local pride, prestige, and independence must be overcome before combinations can be successfully made. Where libraries are few or non-existent, extension plans may be developed from the ground up, and interest will be concentrated on the new institutions rather than on the fate of the old. The greatest opportunities exist in regions like the South or in portions of the West, or in metropolitan areas, large or small, in which libraries are as yet undeveloped outside the central city. Success in regions such as these is likely to point the way to similar movements in other areas.

*Existing service must not be jeopardized.*—In the event that consolidation of libraries actually does take place, it may be accepted as axiomatic that the quality of present service should not be endangered. No matter how altruistic library authorities may be, they will not assent to schemes for amalgamation which do not seem to protect the standing of the libraries they have helped to establish. It is therefore unlikely that unification of libraries will take place to any great extent until it is possible to assure the individual localities that library service to them will be maintained at present levels. More than this, the scheme must be made positively attractive to all.

*The regional library should include all library units in the area.*—If the reasoning in the foregoing sections has been at all sound, it is evident that the regional library should ordinarily include all the book resources of the area. Only when it does so are the maximum advantages of a planned system of library agencies possible. When a separate organization, apart from the large library at the center of the region, is set up for the purpose of giving library service to the outlying communities or the area outside of incorporated cities, a considerable amount of duplication of materials is almost unavoidable. This includes many of the working tools connected with book ordering and cataloging, much reference material, as well as a large number of important

books in many fields, of which perhaps a single copy would serve for the entire region.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, in such cases it is impossible for the county or other regional library to take full advantage of the services of the specialists on the staff of the central city library.

It may be entirely true that the union of the central city library and of service to its more or less rural hinterland was at first not advisable for legal reasons, or because the city library was unable or unwilling to provide as adequately for the work as would be possible for an entirely separate organization. Nevertheless, it is unfortunate to allow a past condition of this sort to stand in the way of eventual unity. This union may take the form of willing abdication by the city in favor of the county, or, perhaps better still, of both being willing to abdicate in favor of some still larger area.

It is sometimes urged that the city and the country are too unlike, in their needs and in the kinds of library service required, to be successfully combined. However, careful students of the social and economic aspects of urban and rural relationships feel that the isolation of the "country" is rapidly disappearing and that the characteristics of the two regions tend "to shade into one another."<sup>25</sup> There seems no inherent impossibility in the combination of the two. Moreover, the actual administration of the rural work is certain to be turned over to staff members specially qualified for undertaking it.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR A REGIONAL LIBRARY LAW

The consideration of the possibilities of regional libraries up to this point has been confined to general questions of principle and policy. In order to make these generalities more concrete, it may be helpful to suggest in outline form the provisions for a

<sup>24</sup> California Taxpayers Association, *Government of Alameda County*, Association Study No. 257 (1933), I, 158.

<sup>25</sup> E. de S. Brunner and J. H. Kolb, *Rural Social Trends* (New York, 1933), pp. 111 ff.; C. R. Wasson and D. Sanderson, *Relation of Community Areas to Town Government in the State of New York*, Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin No. 555 (1933).

regional library law. No single law can possibly meet the political and library conditions of all states, but the draft presented will at least serve as a target for constructive criticism.

Broadly speaking, the fundamental question in framing the provisions for a regional library law is whether to create a special district or *ad hoc* authority completely independent of all other units of local government, or to set up an organization which is at least partially controlled by the agencies of local government. In general, the suggestions made below follow the second plan rather than the first. If the entirely independent library district is preferred, the trustees might be elected by popular vote and might be given power to levy a special library tax up to a certain limit. Since the regional library as here suggested corresponds to no single existing unit of local government, it is practically unavoidable that it be managed by some sort of governing board. The possibilities for the choice of this board of management are so varied that a set method can scarcely be made applicable to all regional units which might be created. To give representation to every county in the region and also to important cities or towns might result in too large and unwieldy a board. No two situations would be exactly alike. It would be especially necessary to provide for the representation of cities in which existing important libraries are already functioning.

In order to allow for the necessary variation in the composition of library boards, it is proposed that a special library charter be drawn up for each region by the survey commission which determines its boundaries or by the state library extension agency. This charter, which would be in effect a plan for the organization of the library, would specify in detail the manner in which the board would be appointed and would also make provision for the support of the library by a tax or by special appropriation. This plan would provide for meeting whatever special conditions might seem to be important in a particular region. For example, a system of weighted representation for populous cities or counties might be provided. Or, if a private corporate library were to be made part of the regional system, representa-



tion of its interests might be necessary. Or, in case the existing libraries were operated by school districts instead of municipal units, members of the regional board might be appointed by the boards of education. In states where conditions are generally similar, uniform provisions regarding board membership could be made part of the law, and the idea of the library charter might then be abandoned.

The tax provisions of any such law are of vital importance. It should be noted that the proposed law provides for minimum state aid of twenty cents per capita for all inhabitants of the region, for local tax support ranging from twenty-five cents to one dollar per capita, and for additional local appropriations for local service, if desired. Minimum support would thus amount to forty-five cents per capita, and the possible maximum would range well over one dollar. However, the amount that any single community would be compelled to pay would not exceed one dollar per capita.

The fixing of these amounts may seem a somewhat arbitrary matter. Admittedly we have as yet no exact proof as to why good library service can seldom be obtained for a smaller amount than one dollar per capita per year. But we at least know that good libraries do require this amount. After a careful investigation, the American Library Association has recently reaffirmed its belief that one dollar per capita "is the average minimum annual income upon which reasonably adequate library service can be maintained."<sup>26</sup>

Specific illustrations for the actual need of approximately this amount of one dollar per capita in providing adequate library service for an entire state may be drawn from two states, on opposite sides of the continent, which now have practically complete library service. Massachusetts, as we have already noted, provides library service to all its more than 4,000,000 citizens through a system of 410 separate local libraries. The latest available figures show that the average per capita cost for the libra-

<sup>26</sup> "Standards for Public Libraries," American Library Association, *Bulletin*, XXVII (1933), 513-14.



ries of the whole state is roughly one dollar (\$1.03 in 1931 and \$0.94 in 1932).<sup>27</sup> California, through its system of 46 county libraries and approximately 200 separate municipal libraries, gives library service to more than 98 per cent of its people. As long ago as 1926 the cost of this service amounted to \$1.08 per capita. Thus two different states, under entirely different geographic conditions, and also with largely different types of library units, require approximately the same amount per capita for library service.

The outline of the suggested law follows:

### SUGGESTED PROVISIONS FOR A REGIONAL LIBRARY LAW

- I. Legal Basis of Regional Library
  - A. Necessity for constitutional provision regarding public libraries to be considered in each state. Brief general statement in constitution probably desirable.
  - B. Libraries organized under general library law of the state.
  - C. Libraries declared by law to be an educational purpose of the state.
- II. Establishment
  - A. Survey of whole state or of particular regions to be made by commission appointed by state library extension agency, or by governor.<sup>28</sup>
  - B. Survey commission to present report to state extension agency, showing counties and/or taxing units to be included in the region for taxing purposes.
  - C. Survey commission to draft proposed charter for regional library, specifying composition and manner of appointment of managing board of library and method of tax support.
  - D. Report of survey commission and proposed charter to be submitted to following bodies for consideration:
    1. State library extension agency.
    2. Governing bodies of all counties wholly or partially included in the region.
    3. Governing bodies of all incorporated places in region.

<sup>27</sup> Massachusetts Board of Free Public Library Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1932, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Suggested composition of survey commission: specialists in government, social problems, and library administration, a county supervisor, a mayor or city council member, a school-board member, a library trustee, a school superintendent, and one or more citizens. Or state extension agency might make own survey.

- E. When approved by state extension agency and by two-thirds of counties and two-thirds of incorporated places, plan to be considered in effect.<sup>29</sup>
- F. When plan is approved, library charter to have force of law.

### III. Exemptions

- A. Any county or municipal corporation of over 5,000 population which has its own library to be exempted from region by vote of its governing body.

### IV. Managing Board of Regional Library

- A. To be an educational corporation acting as joint agent of state and local government.
- B. To be composed of from three to eleven members fairly representing the counties, cities, and other governmental units included in the region. Number and method of appointment to be determined by the charter (see II, C). One member (included in total) to be appointed by state extension agency as representative of the state.
- C. Term of office five years, one or more terms expiring annually.
- D. Powers of board.
  - 1. Full corporate powers, including power to acquire and hold property and funds.
  - 2. Full powers of management of library; including power to appoint and remove staff; fix compensation of staff; purchase books, periodicals, equipment, and supplies; purchase sites, erect and rent buildings; control all expenditures; make rules and regulations for staff and use of library; make contracts for service with units of all types; and borrow and loan books from and to other libraries.

### V. Tax Support<sup>30</sup>

- A. State to contribute a minimum of twenty cents (or other designated amount) per capita for inhabitants of region. This amount to be derived from general funds of state or from tax specially earmarked for library purposes.
- B. Charter to determine whether local support shall be by appropriation or special tax. Preferred method to be based on annual appropriation of certain amount per capita.
- C. Minimum annual rate for local tax on all units in region to be twenty-five cents per capita, maximum one dollar per capita (or other amounts determined). Rate for county or city in which central library is located to be 20 per cent greater than general rate.
- D. Library board required to submit proposed budget and rate per capita to all county governing boards or county budget commis-

<sup>29</sup> Alternative for establishment: popular referendum in counties to be included in region.

<sup>30</sup> Alternatives: entire support from a general state tax. Or: budget to be submitted to state budget or tax commission and per capita rate determined by that body. Or: tax levy by library board limited to fixed millage or per capita rate.

sions, and to all governing bodies of cities of over a certain size as determined by charter, showing in detail proposed expenditures for all branches and local service and for general administration. When approved by a majority of foregoing units, required amounts to be collected with taxes for each county.

- E. Any municipal corporation or other taxing unit may appropriate additional sums which shall be used solely for maintenance of agencies within its own boundaries.

#### VI. Financial Administration

- A. Library to be an independent fiscal agency.<sup>31</sup>

- 1. To have custody of all funds received from state and local sources.
- 2. To keep its own accounts.
- 3. To make all purchases and pay all claims.

- B. Accounts to be audited annually by state auditing department.

#### VII. Changes in Composition of Region

- A. Branches or other agencies to be changed from one regional area to another with consent of the two library boards concerned and with approval of governing body of municipal unit in which agency is located, and also of state extension agency.

- B. Any city, county, or other unit not a part of region may join on application of its governing body.

- C. Any county, or city of over 5,000 population may withdraw from regional library at beginning of any fiscal year upon six months' prior notice.

#### VIII. Personnel

- A. All appointments of professional staff to be made under provisions of graded certification scheme established by state law.

#### IX. Use

- A. Library to be free to all persons residing or employed in area.

- B. Free to other persons under such rules as board may establish.

#### X. Co-operation with Other Libraries in Regional Area

- A. Regional library specially charged with responsibility for co-operation with university, college, school, private, and special libraries in region.

- B. State library extension agency made responsible for creation of regional library councils, composed of representatives of all libraries in the region. These councils to foster plans for library co-operation.

- C. State legislature authorized to make special appropriations for assisting in foregoing purposes.

#### XI. Service to School Libraries

- A. All school library service, except when specially exempted, to be administered as a part of the regional library system. Boards of education to pay a designated amount to regional library for this purpose.

<sup>31</sup> Alternative: the library fund to be placed in the custody of one of the county treasurers in the region, who would be made disbursing officer for the library.

- B. School libraries may be used as general branches, when permitted by local boards of education.
- C. School library funds, when these exist, to be expended by regional library for use of school libraries.

## XII. Buildings

- A. Local branches to be erected by individual municipal units, or quarters to be provided by local units.
- B. Central building to be erected or provided by headquarters city. State may assist in construction of building.
- C. General bond issues for buildings throughout region to be approved under same conditions governing municipal bonds. Proposal must be approved by two-thirds of counties and municipal units in region.

## XIII. Report and Supervision

- A. Annual report to be submitted to state library extension agency, to all governmental units assisting in support of library, and to all boards of education served.
- B. State library extension agency to establish standards for library service and to be given power of enforcement of standards through inspection, through withdrawal of state support, and other means.

## CONCLUSION

To many readers the entire contents of the last two chapters may have appeared to be an extended brief in favor of the application of the regional idea to the government and administration of public libraries. No doubt a brief compiled by opponents of the plan could be made equally long and effective. The case for local initiative, as opposed to regionalism, is a strong one; it is not the intention of the writer to dispute its cogency.

Four strong arguments against the feasibility of regional schemes stand out as worthy of special mention. First is the argument of enlightened local self-interest. Many existing libraries are frankly not seriously interested in any proposals regarding larger units because they feel they can do better for themselves as independent institutions. In a large number of instances and under present conditions the validity of this contention can scarcely be denied, provided the library concerned is reasonably strong and self-contained. Aside from consolidations within the same city, there is apparently no example of a really first-class library which has voluntarily subordinated itself by complete

amalgamation with a county or other large unit, and therefore argument by example cannot be used. In short, such libraries must be very positively convinced that there is some decided advantage to be gained by union with other libraries. However, in a very large portion of the country this situation does not apply, because there are so few strong libraries that most really good libraries ought themselves to be regional centers.

Again, it may be contended that the regional library may be too large, too cumbersome, too slow, and possibly too bureaucratic in its methods. The larger the library, the more complicated its processes. This is indeed a possible danger under certain conditions, and both positive and negative examples may be cited. There is, unfortunately, no legal way in which the dangers of size may be avoided; only wise administration can prevent them. But there is no inherent impossibility of successful administration of a large unit. Moreover, a very large proportion of the proposed regional areas would never be large enough to cause serious difficulty of this sort.

Third, individual initiative may be lost when combinations are made. The useful library boards in the smaller cities and towns which would be wiped out by combination of libraries cannot be wholly replaced. Local committees of an advisory nature may do so only in part. On the purely administrative side, as well, initiative may be lessened, because it will be necessary for all parts of the system to do things in much the same way.

Lastly, the attempt to carry the regional library beyond the county encounters both practical and theoretical obstacles. Questions of taxation or support are difficult and complex. There is involved the creation of a unit which does not now exist, or instead the development of some federal plan by which present units may combine, neither of which is easy. To a large extent it is against the best doctrine in governmental organization, which deplores the creation of *ad hoc* districts or authorities of any kind. Naturally, when (or if, as the reader chooses) regional government on a complete scale becomes an established fact, it may solve the library's problem. In any event, it cannot



be disputed that the creation of a larger unit of library government would often wipe out a considerable number of existing smaller units, with their separate boards, and this would considerably simplify the existing complexity of governmental structure.

The advantages of library regionalism, on the other hand, center about an enlarged consciousness of the importance of a system of libraries, of the problem of library service as a whole, rather than about the library as a matter of concern only to individual communities. Just as the system of public education builds up from lower to higher levels, so must the library hierarchy. Objectives must be broadened and opportunities for all library users should be equalized as far as possible. All of this can scarcely be accomplished by a system of disunited small units. The more the successful individual library strengthens and extends its independent position, the more difficult it is to secure a united front.

As for the large library, it cannot possibly restrict its use to the people of its own city. It cannot avoid becoming a center for its smaller neighbors. Its technical and bibliographical equipment will be used by the staffs of adjacent smaller libraries; its book stock will be used as much as possible, within or without the regulations imposed by its trustees. To a large extent, attempts made to preserve its isolation are necessarily vain, since every regulation designed for this purpose is likely to be circumvented. In a larger sense the restrictions are against common sense and logic, even when they may be necessary as temporary measures.

Specifically, the advantages for a regional library include: (1) a broad, well-selected, fluid book collection, available to all residents of the region on equal terms; (2) accurate and sound technical processes administered in a uniform manner throughout the system; and (3) a well-organized and united staff, including a group of specialists able to aid readers of many kinds directly through their own efforts and also through the guidance they are able to give to all parts of the system.

The thinking of librarians and library trustees is slowly and gradually building up to higher levels in its appreciation of the possibilities of larger service areas for library systems. The next stage in the process will come in concentration on the idea that there is much to be gained by a bold program of unity and consolidation rather than something to be lost.

Concerning much of what has been said in this chapter there is doubt. Concerning much of it, on the other hand, there is a high degree of certainty. The part which is doubtful applies in the main to the extent to which the idea of regional library service may safely be carried; it does not affect the soundness of the general principle that library units must be large enough to be strong and effective. The fact that the program is difficult at best, and perhaps more than a little visionary at the moment, is not sufficient reason for the avoidance of the issue and for failure to consider its solution on broad lines.

## CHAPTER XI

### FUTURE RELATIONS OF THE LIBRARY AND GOVERNMENT

THE present forms of organization of the various types of library government have now been surveyed, and certain suggestions as to the direction of possible advance have been offered. In considering each type the historical reasons for its evolution have been presented, and an attempt has been made to analyze its strength and its weakness and to point out its future possibilities. In this concluding chapter these divergent lines of development must be brought together in a brief summary, and a forecast of the possible future trends of library progress in relation to government must be ventured.

Apology for the emphasis which has been placed on the importance of history and tradition in determining the present position of the library does not seem necessary. Historical forces are in large measure responsible not only for the forms of organization but also for the building up of important values. These values are worth conserving, whatever the future governmental status of the library may be.

#### PRESENT FORMS OF LIBRARY GOVERNMENT: SUMMARY

If the impression conveyed by the preceding chapters is one of confusion and of lack of sharply defined and systematic direction, it is not surprising. In a program which has been essentially opportunist in nature, there is no common thread of similarity in form on which to draw the various parts together. We speak loosely of the public library system of the country, but to use the word "system" in this connection is decidedly misleading. Only in a few states is library service universal in extent, and in those it is scarcely systematic. In no state is it equal, and little serious attempt at equalization has been made. Substan-

tial uniformity in form has been achieved in a few states, but throughout the country as a whole there is the greatest possible variation both in details and in underlying principles.

The present time, critical alike for government and library, is a convenient checking-point at which to summarize the position of the various types of libraries which we have been considering throughout this study.

The libraries of the corporation and association group are still numerous but have passed the zenith of their importance as a class. Some of them have earned the right to survive, if they really desire to retain their present forms. Others will continue to exist through the sheer inertia of tradition and custom. As a group, future years will undoubtedly show a slow but steady decrease in their number and importance.

The school-district type of library has been confined to a few states and is making no progress outside of this group. There is little present evidence that this type of library will increase in national importance, although a major swing in the objectives of public education might cause a revival of interest in the governmental connection between the library and the school. The final direction taken by the most important group of school-district libraries, those of Ohio, will be interesting and highly significant as an outstanding example of the future possibilities of this type of library.

The municipal public library has been generally accepted as the standard type. In their connection with municipal units of all kinds, we have seen that public libraries are divided into two unequal groups. In the larger of these, the library is administered by a separate board; in the smaller, it is a city department under a single executive. The future of these two classes will receive attention later in the chapter.<sup>1</sup> As a whole, the municipal library group seems to have almost reached the limit of further development in point of numbers, simply because it has arrived at the zone in which future library progress is bound to be difficult. The cities and towns which now have no public libraries

<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 349-50.

are either those in which the desire for library service has not made itself insistent or those whose resources are insufficient, certainly under present-day conditions, to permit the establishment of libraries. The number of independent local library units is already far too great.

The county library movement, likewise, has pre-empted the most favorably disposed territory and is momentarily at a standstill. It may, under more favorable circumstances, renew its advance, but its progress will not be easy. Its future depends, in large part at least, on the future of the county itself as a governmental unit—a matter which at this writing is by no means certain.

In short, the forces of local effort and initiative, by which the public libraries of the nation have been largely built up, have very nearly reached the limit of their power to extend library service. Further progress of the library movement by the individualistic method, either quantitatively over larger areas of territory or, to a lesser extent, qualitatively in establishing more uniform and higher standards of service in existing libraries, is bound to be increasingly slow and difficult.

Meanwhile, the forces supporting a collectivist philosophy for libraries in general, and larger units in particular, are organizing and gathering strength at an accelerating pace. They are faced with many practical difficulties, both in their future relations to government and in their relations to the library as an institution.

The foregoing impressionistic view of the library scene should be accompanied by a statistical recapitulation of the various types of library government. In preceding chapters libraries in cities of over 30,000 population have been distributed among the different classes in detail. Here it is only necessary, as a summary, to tabulate the total numbers in each type, and these figures are shown in Table XV.

Detailed distribution of the smaller library units among the foregoing categories has not been attempted, but would not materially alter the general pattern. The great bulk of the smaller



libraries will fall in the municipal group, including in this class the libraries of small cities, towns, townships, villages, and other similar units. Only a few small libraries are of the city department type without boards, but each of the other major classes has its share of smaller libraries.

The preponderance of the board type, equally positive among large and small libraries, needs only to be mentioned. However, it is important to emphasize the essential similarity of libra-

TABLE XV  
SUMMARY OF TYPES OF LIBRARY GOVERNMENT IN CITIES  
OF OVER 30,000 POPULATION\*

| Type of Library                               | Number |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------|
| Corporation and association libraries.....    | 54     |
| School-district libraries:                    |        |
| Under separate library boards.....            | 23     |
| Under boards of education.....                | 17     |
| Municipal libraries:                          |        |
| Under separate library boards.....            | 204    |
| Without boards.....                           | 13     |
| County libraries (part of county government): |        |
| Under separate boards.....                    | 2      |
| Without boards.....                           | 2      |
| Total libraries.....                          | 315    |

\* Number of libraries exceeds number of cities (310) because some cities have more than one library. Two cities have no libraries. Cranston, R.I., which has six separate libraries, is not included in this tabulation.

ries managed by boards, whether they be corporation, school-district, city, or county libraries. While their relations to the various units of government are different in many important particulars, they all have in common the advantages and disadvantages of the board system of library control.

#### EVALUATION OF TYPES OF LIBRARY GOVERNMENT

No attempt has been made in this study to develop exact criteria which would infallibly determine which type of library government is best, and why it is. At the present time detailed and accurate standards for the evaluation of library service are lacking, just as similar standards for local government in general

are lacking.<sup>2</sup> There is a real need for further attempts to develop objective standards useful in judging the quality of library service. But even if it were possible to determine mathematically the exact value of library service in a particular city, it might still be difficult in many cities to establish any direct causal connection between the form of library government and the success of the library.

It is thus necessary to fall back upon practical experience and rationalization in making conclusions as to types of library control and their effect on the welfare of the library. Just as the form of municipal government itself may be in some part responsible for the success or failure of municipal administration, but never for all of it, so for library government and library success. It is reasonably certain that some cities, because of their history and because of the quality of their citizenship, will be well governed, regardless of form. These same cities would probably not long tolerate poor library service, also regardless of the form of library organization.

For this reason we may with apparent inconsistency, and yet quite reasonably, advocate the maintenance of one type of library government in one city or state and of another type in another place. The explanation is that certain types have been successful in particular places for good and sufficient reasons, and a piece of governmental machinery in good working order should ordinarily not be disturbed.

This method of judgment of the governmental position of the library does not leave us entirely in the dark as to conclusions, even though they are not proved in any mathematical sense. Some of these conclusions may be set down in categorical form, as follows:

1. It is a safe general rule that a library which receives the bulk of its support from governmental sources should, except under unusual circumstances, be a part of government rather than a private corporation.

<sup>2</sup> T. H. Reed, *Municipal Government in the United States* (rev. ed.; New York, 1934), pp. 332-33.

2. As yet, no better type of library control has been devised than that in which the library is administered under the direction of a board of trustees with reasonably extensive powers. This board should be appointed by the mayor or by the governing body of the unit served.

3. The foregoing conclusion applies with equal force to school-district libraries. It is in general true that adult library service very often has had a hard struggle when placed under the direct authority of boards of education.

4. Similarly, there is no conclusive evidence that direct administration of public libraries as city departments under city commissioners or city managers will benefit the library either in its financial support or in its internal administration. In these cities, too, it is best to retain the library board appointed by the council.<sup>3</sup>

5. There is much reason to believe that a certain degree of independence of management and of governmental position is beneficial to the library and that a reasonable amount of legal protection of its interests is still necessary.

6. This independence, however, should not extend to the vesting of taxing authority in the library board. Determination of the library tax rate or appropriation should be made by the governing body of the unit served, or fixed by a popular referendum.

7. A new principle for the financial support of libraries is urgently required. The amount received by the library should be based on the need for service rather than on the wealth of the community. This implies appropriations on a per capita basis and equalization of library support throughout the states.

This list of conclusions might be considerably extended. The foregoing items, however, are of major importance as far as the present forms of library organization are concerned.

But sufficient attention has been given to the credits and debits of present types. For the remainder of the chapter we must consider somewhat more broadly the possibilities confronting the library in its future governmental connections.

<sup>3</sup> W. B. Munro, *Municipal Administration* (New York, 1934), p. 462.

## DIRECTIONS IN WHICH THE LIBRARY MAY MOVE

To say that the public libraries of the country are standing at the crossroads in their governmental relations is perhaps forcing the figure too much. Hard-pressed as they are, library authorities may be using all their energies in the maintenance of their present positions, with little time for thought concerning movement in new directions. Yet, looking ahead, it is clear that the library has the choice of several directions which it may follow in the future. The decisions which are made concerning these different alternatives are of basic importance; all persons in any way responsible for the future place of the library in government should give these problems most careful consideration.

Some libraries, it is true, are so situated that the suggested alternatives seem very remote, but eventually a choice must be made for the great mass of public libraries. In some cases, perhaps, the choice of roads will be a voluntary one, over which the library itself has some control; in other instances, the library will have no volition of its own and will merely follow the general course of local government. When the best interests of the library coincide with trends in governmental change, the library will find itself in a fortunate position and decisions will be easy.

In any case, it seems important that an early decision be reached. The library should move as rapidly and as decisively as possible toward its ultimate place in government; its organization, its system of technical records, its policy of use and service, its book stocks—all depend upon the decision which is made. Much time and readjustment will be saved if the future of the institution as a unit of government can be determined soon.

One other general point is worthy of emphasis. As has been noted repeatedly in the course of this study, libraries have tended toward a policy of opportunism in decisions of this sort and have been influenced by considerations of immediate self-interest. In the future, more unity of purpose, more movement as a whole, is to be anticipated. There is urgent need for a clear and unselfish view of a combined library objective, with co-operation and unity the watchwords to be emphasized.



Without consuming further time in generalities, we may say that most public libraries will move in one or more of the following directions: toward the city, toward the system of public education, toward some form of larger unit, toward the state, or toward the nation. These directions, it must be understood, are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Thus, for example, libraries following the course toward a larger unit may also be taking the direction of state control. Each of these different possibilities must be examined briefly.

*Future relation of the library and the city.*—Most public libraries have already taken the road to the city, and further consideration of the municipal relationships of the library may seem superfluous. Nevertheless, an implied question of great importance is involved at this point, even though its significance is perhaps not always fully understood. The real issue is whether the library will be classified, finally and definitely, as a municipal function and nothing more, or whether some other position in the framework of government will be found for it.

It must be remembered that we are here dealing with several thousand municipal library units, ranging in size from the Chicago Public Library to the smallest village or town library. Roughly speaking, this great mass of libraries falls into two major groups. The first of these is composed of at most a few hundred city libraries large enough and strong enough to maintain themselves as efficient independent institutions. Much the larger group, numerically, is composed of all city, township, town, and village libraries which are below the level of what may be called independent efficiency. The dividing line between the two groups has not been carefully surveyed, and it is perhaps doubtful whether it can ever be precisely defined. Different states and municipalities will make practical decisions on this point which are not necessarily based on exact formulas.

Candor compels the admission that in the first group, that made up of larger libraries, the immediate advantage to the library probably lies in the choice of continued union with the city. Any realistic approach to the question, therefore, leads to



the conclusion that most of these libraries will, at least for a time, remain a part of the cities, where questions of administration and finance, while serious enough, are not complicated by additional questions of governmental control and geography. This is the philosophy of individualism; its strength is to be found in those portions of the country where the city is the dominant political institution.

The group of small municipal libraries, on the other hand, faces a quite different set of circumstances, with the disadvantages of independence usually outweighing its advantages. It may be long before these small libraries are fully convinced of the desirability of moving toward some form of larger unit, but eventually many of them will take that direction.

For those libraries, large or small, which remain a part of the city or other municipal unit, the basic question revolves about the old issue of independence. It must be determined whether the public library is to be allowed a reasonable measure of independent administration under its own board, or whether it will be completely absorbed in every way into the mechanism of the city. This question will be debated over and over again in scores of American cities in coming years.

Here the library is in the hands of forces greater than itself. Much depends on the general progress of reform and improvement in municipal government. If, through the city-manager plan or any other plan of government, outstanding strides are made toward efficiency and simplicity in local government, then, of course, the reasons for partially independent status of the library will gradually disappear, and the library-board type of organization will begin to pass out of the picture.

With respect to the board plan of administration in general, it seems apparent that the pendulum is beginning to swing back toward a somewhat more favorable position and that board control "is in greater disfavor than it deserves to be."<sup>4</sup> In the future it is likely that boards will more often be judged on their merits and less often ruled out for reasons of structural consist-

<sup>4</sup> Munro, *op. cit.*, p. 27; see also Reed, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-86.

ency. The library board, in particular, has been tried under highly varied conditions and has proved reasonably true under most of them. It is suggested as the part of wisdom that attention be concentrated on improving board personnel and management when necessary rather than on trying out new methods of library control.

*Future relations of the library and public education.*—The possibility of the closer union of the public library and the system of public education is so attractive that it is certain to be a perennial subject for consideration. Perhaps it will reach the point, in some states, that the library will become wholly and frankly educational and will, voluntarily or otherwise, seek organic amalgamation with the public schools. In general, this union is so foreign to the whole history and tradition of the library movement that its consummation on a large scale seems unlikely.

There are two outstanding difficulties in the way of formal governmental union between library and school. One is that the legal and administrative unit adopted for the school is not necessarily the best library unit. The school unit is relatively more intensively used than is the library; furthermore, it is geared to the movement of children, while, in its broadest territorial aspects, the library is geared to the movements of adults. In the second place, the great variation in the methods and objectives of the two institutions and the marked inferiority of the library in financial importance make the dangers of subordination of the library program to that of the schools very real. Most libraries will not care to risk the experiment.

Making the library a unit of the school district under its own board has some advantages but does not wholly solve the difficulties suggested above. If the library board is given independent powers, its relations to the school board are not essentially different from those existing between a city library board and the board of education. If the library board is definitely subordinated to the school board, then the question of the subordination of public library interests reappears.

In its future relations to the educational system the library

faces two practical questions of much importance, to which answers must soon be given. One of these is the problem of the future relation of the library to adult education. Whatever the legal relationship between the public library and the public school may be, the library must not lose its opportunity or neglect its responsibility in connection with adult education. It is conceivable that the library will itself become a much more direct and formal agency of adult education in the sense that it will conduct regular classes in many subjects, give lecture courses, and in general take an active part in the organization and direction of the whole system of adult education.

Here, again, library history and tradition do not seem to favor the possibility. More important, in such a program the library would be putting itself in rather direct competition with the educational system, which wields far too much influence and power to permit the extensive advance of the public library into the field of formal adult education. In spite of this conclusion, however, the scope of the library's activities in adult education must be greatly broadened.

The other question is the ever present one of unified administration of school and public libraries. Into the intricacies of this question the present investigation has not attempted to go. It has been shown that unity of library administration is one of the possible advantages—not always achieved—of public libraries administered by boards of education.<sup>5</sup> Important though a more satisfactory answer to this question may be, it is unlikely that the possibility of its solution will be decisive in causing the formal affiliation of the library and the school.

On the whole, the safest prophecy seems to be that the educational aspects of the library will be greatly extended and that it will become a recognized part of the educational activities sponsored by the state. This does not, however, imply legal absorption of the library into the public school system.

*Movement toward larger library units.*—From the point of view of complete library service to all the people, the movement of

<sup>5</sup> See pp. 141-43.

the public library toward some form of larger unit is the most important possibility in the next period of library development. And it is in this connection that the library of the future most nearly comes to a parting of the ways with the library of the present and the past.

The point which must under no circumstances be forgotten is that the public library is not necessarily, or even properly, a strictly municipal function. The convenience, simplicity, and the practical advantages of making the library a city or town unit are not in any way denied. But the fact remains that most good city libraries are potential centers for service outside their own boundaries.<sup>6</sup>

In their efforts to serve the people of America, the library forces, to use a military analogy, are fighting a disjointed battle on a whole series of disconnected fronts. In some manner these isolated detachments must be consolidated, united, and strengthened and made to advance on a broad front to common, well-defined objectives.

In the inevitable movement toward the larger unit of service, three methods are open to the library: (1) piecemeal expansion through contracts between larger cities and towns and surrounding governmental units, (2) further development of the county library, and (3) the creation of a system of still larger units or districts. By one or the other of these methods the advance of the library into territory as yet without library service must be accomplished.

The extent to which libraries, and also governmental units now without libraries, will join this movement toward the larger unit will depend to a considerable degree on the attractiveness of the scheme to groups of libraries of different sorts. It will depend also on objective proof of the advantages of the large-unit library system. As yet, this point has not been sufficiently studied in detail, and it is a field for further intensive investigation.

The average small city or town library, in its own interest,

<sup>6</sup> This statement applies with most force to cities which are independent social and economic units. It is least applicable to satellite cities in metropolitan areas.



should be an easy convert to the large-unit idea. If governmental obstacles can be overcome, there seems little reason for the continuance of independent libraries of this type. On this point a considerable body of favorable experience has already been recorded. The strong city library, for exactly opposite reasons, is likely to be lukewarm about the idea. There is, it must be confessed, no compelling reason why such cities, for their own advantage, should take part in the movement.

The most effective unit in such a campaign is likely to be the strong regional library. There is, in many places, no way by which a library of this type can be made to correspond to the existing structure of government. Admittedly, this is a serious difficulty, but there is no reason why it cannot be overcome if the state and the local units admit their joint responsibilities.

A library of this sort, serving a natural area, rather than a fixed political unit, will be an educational corporation, chartered by the state, jointly supported by the local units and the state, and possibly aided by the federal government. In many respects—in its legal basis, in the character and method of choice of its personnel, and in its general objectives—it will not be unlike a college. In this form of organization the public library may possibly most nearly approximate its common designation as the college of the people.

*Movement of the library toward the state.*—It is in the field of the relationship of the local public library to the state that the most active conflicts between the individualist and collectivist schools of thought are likely to develop. Certain states have advanced library service to a high point by the efforts of individual local units, stimulated, advised, and to some extent standardized by the state library extension agencies. These states will doubtless prefer the old methods to some new plan for state intervention on a more comprehensive scale.

In the majority of states, however, it seems unavoidable that public libraries must move in the direction of a more positive and effective interest of the state in library organization and support. Unless this state interest becomes a reality, there is,



in a large portion of the country, little hope for the development of public libraries on a really complete and systematic basis.

It is most unlikely that the interest of the state will extend to actual management of the library system as a whole, except possibly in very small states. Rather than attempt direct administration, the activities of the state should be confined to the following fields: (1) necessary legislation, (2) maintenance of standards, (3) grants-in-aid of sufficient size to permit a substantial amount of equalization of library service throughout the state.

In its legislation for libraries the state should not fail to establish beyond question the principle that the library is an educational concern of the state. As rapidly as seems advisable, it should provide for a general and reasonably uniform system of public libraries. In order to protect libraries from political inroads, it should by law and accompanying regulations provide for certification of library personnel. State library legislation should further establish a wide basis of tax support, founded on the principle of actual need for libraries, rather than on the ability of the local community to pay.

*Future relation of the library and the national government.*—Many librarians now are asserting that the federal government alone has financial strength to make possible the development of adequate library service throughout the nation. This would mean federal aid on a large scale, and the future of this question is, at the moment, veiled in obscurity. If such aid should materialize, it is reasonably certain that it will not be on a pork-barrel basis. Insistence on standards and a controlled and wise use of funds will almost surely be features of any plan adopted. Regardless, however, of what the national government decides concerning financial aid to public libraries, there is little doubt of its responsibility for leadership in the planning of large-scale co-ordination and strengthening of library resources.

#### CONCLUSION

Broadly speaking, two main themes have been the subjects of consideration, and sometimes of debate, throughout this study.

One is the question of the *form* of library government as it is found in libraries of all types. The other is the question of the *unit* of government with which the library is to be affiliated, and of the territorial areas which the library serves or might possibly serve. The second question relates largely to the *level* at which the library is placed in the general scheme of government.

These two important questions are, of course, related to each other, but they may be answered independently. It is not necessary to conclude that the present order is right in both of these respects or wrong in both. On the contrary, it is possible to defend the existing forms of library organization, and at the same time to question whether the present governmental connections of the library are the best. This is substantially the conclusion reached in the present investigation.

As far as the form of library control is concerned, there seems little reason to change the traditional models, except perhaps in detail. Constant and continued improvement, rather than change, should be sought. Whatever its governmental connections, the library is likely to succeed best under a form of organization which combines a lay board and a professional executive. The answer to this question is not necessarily bad because it is conservative and old-fashioned.

The question regarding the library unit and the governmental level of the library is more important than the first. It is becoming more and more clear that the library is not necessarily a town, or a city, or even a county affair. To reach its greatest usefulness to all people the library must step out of the strictly local class into a wider field, accompanied, probably, by greatly enlarged units, both of service and of government. It would be contrary to the whole history of American libraries to expect that this result will be achieved by uniform methods in all parts of the country.

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